

Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI) **FAQs**



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Why have we developed a new framework?

The importance of having a specialist framework for vision impairment (VI) education that addresses the specific development and learning needs associated with blindness and partial sight, and also reflects the distinctive skills required by learners with VI, is widely recognised within the vision impairment education field.

Children and young people with VI (CYPVI) need to be taught a range of specialist skills that promote independent learning, mobility, everyday living and social communication. We know from research evidence that those CYPVI who learn these skills are much more likely than those who don't to achieve better long term outcomes in terms of making a successful transition towards greater independence during adulthood. The acquisition of these skills needs direct, high quality specialist support; they are skills acquired by sighted children and young people either incidentally, or skills that sighted children and young people don't need, for example literacy through braille or habilitation (mobility and independence skills).

The population of CYPVI is diverse and encompasses children and young people educated in mainstream settings and those taught in special school or college settings with a variety of designations e.g. SLD, PMLD. However, what these children and young people have in common is that

they achieve more positive outcomes in the long-term when they receive high quality specialist teaching – differentiated to meet their individual needs – from specialists in the field of vision impairment education (i.e. Qualified teacher for children and young people with VI (QTVI) and Registered Qualified Habilitation Specialist (RQHS)).

To date several specialist curricula and outcomes frameworks for CYPVI have been used in the UK, none of which have any statutory status. Having such a range of curricula and outcome frameworks can lead to a lack of clarity about what should be taught, when it is taught and the importance of its delivery by a suitable qualified specialist professional. This, and the fact that there is a lack of a shared vocabulary, can make it difficult to communicate to the non-specialist education sector the need for these skills to be taught and who has responsibility for what. These differences in provision around the UK can mean a “postcode lottery” in terms of which skills are taught and developed by CYPVI. The situation is not helped by the fact that childhood VI is a very low incidence disability and education policy, and practice tends to focus on the needs of the larger population groups.

Through liaison with specialist teachers for children and young people with VI, the professional association of the Vision Impairment Education Workforce (VIEW), discovered that while a wide range of resources and strategies are being developed to support the teaching of a specialist

curriculum, these initiatives are happening within individual local authority support services and schools for CYPVI rather than as part of a wider, coherent strategy. VIEW also found that the teachers concerned are keen to share their ideas and resources and to learn from each other.

Further consultation carried out by VIEW with specialist teachers and academics in VI education found that there was enthusiasm for a project to both develop a **national, UK specialist VI curriculum framework**, and to support the development and sharing of education resources that can be used to deliver the curriculum on the ground.

The timing of the project to develop a new curriculum is crucial because it coincides with:

- Key changes in teacher training, including a review of the mandatory qualification (MQ) for teachers of children and young people with sensory impairment (vision impairment, hearing impairment, and multi-sensory impairment).
- Budget cuts to education support services over recent years.
- Increased delegation of SEN funding and responsibility away from local authorities to individual schools.
- The increasing demands of the academic curriculum as a result of recent education reforms, squeezing the time available for non-academic teaching.

These points, along with the inconsistent approaches to special skills teaching described above create a confused landscape which makes it difficult for the specialist education profession to get the key messages across to schools, local government departments (who influence budget spend at local level) and government education department officials (who influence national policy). Increasingly, this is having a negative impact on specialist provision. It is therefore more important than ever to ensure a coherent and consistent offer when it comes to the specialist curriculum. This will help to prevent the teaching of these specialist skills being deprioritised as tighter budgets encourage other types of learning to be prioritised over the essential specialist skills required by CYPVI.

To conclude, consultation and research have highlighted the need for a new single unifying framework, informed by existing specialist VI curricula/frameworks, to underpin the education of CYPVI in the UK.

What is the 'UK specialist VI curriculum framework' project?

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) in partnership with the professional association for the Vision Impairment Education Workforce (VIEW), Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) at University of Birmingham, and Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT) launched a project in 2020 to address the needs outlined in the section: **'Why have we developed a new framework?'**.

The project has two core strands:

Strand 1: The establishment of a single, UK wide, specialist framework for children and young people with Vision Impairment (VI).

The 2-year project, funded by RNIB, draws on extensive consultation across the VI sector to provide a single, unifying framework for the specialist elements of VI education, aiming to give clarity, consistency of provision for children and young people, and a shared vocabulary for non-specialists and VI specialist education professionals.

Strand 2: The creation of an online professional resource hub to host resources and tools which support the delivery of the framework in practice.

As stated in more detail in the section:

'Why have we developed a new framework?' VIEW has discovered that a wide range of resources and strategies are being developed to support the teaching of a specialist curriculum framework in individual VI services and schools across the UK. These initiatives are happening within individual local authority support services and schools for pupils with vision impairment rather than as part of a wider, coherent strategy. We know that the teachers concerned are keen to share their ideas and resources and to learn from each other.

The aim of the project is to encourage and support sector colleagues in sharing strategies and resources they have developed with the wider sector by providing a free accessible online hub for the sector to upload resources to and use as a first point of reference for locating resources and information relevant to teaching the specialist skills required. We hope this will encourage a knowledge sharing culture which will in turn save time, improve efficiency and consistency in what is being taught across the UK. This element of the project involves identification and cataloguing of a wide range of resources and strategies currently in use across the sector as well as gap analysis of where resourcing is low in order for future development work to be targeted here.

What do we mean by a 'framework' and what benefits will having a new framework achieve?

The framework is a high-level UK wide resource which details the key areas in which CYPVI and their families require specialist support. It clarifies and defines the elements of specialist skill development, interventions and best practice support that are essential for CYPVI. It also enables parents to understand the pathways of support for their child and the services involved in providing that support. Further, the framework highlights the responsibility of non-specialists in supporting the delivery of the content of this framework as part of their wider commitments to educational inclusion.

The framework has been developed to help improve the outcomes for CYPVI across the whole range of abilities and needs. It can make a positive contribution to their long-term emotional wellbeing by helping to ensure that they progress into adulthood with the appropriate skills and that they achieve in line with their underlying cognitive ability and fulfil their potential.

The development of the framework has been informed by a large-scale consultation process (using the Delphi method). This process has involved three rounds of consultations with a range of stakeholders (e.g. CYPVI, parents, QTVIs, RQHSs as well as other specialists involved in the education

and support of CYPVI) using focus groups and questionnaires. The framework will sit alongside and be integrated with the academic curriculum to which all children are entitled. It has been informed by existing frameworks including, the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) in North America, National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) Learner Outcomes and Quality Standards for Habilitation.

The framework is non-statutory at this time although we will be striving to change this post launch to ensure that the core areas identified are recognised as essential (not optional) skills that CYPVI must be taught in order to thrive, thus supporting the need for specialist provision to be provided.

It is envisaged that the creation of a single, UK specialist VI curriculum framework, predicated on a model of independence, empowerment and agency will create consistency and provide a gold standard for VI education, encouraging schools and local authorities to focus on long-term outcomes rather than short-term strategies that foster dependency or save money.

So, to conclude, key intended benefits of the framework include:

- Improved outcomes for all children and young people with vision impairment in fulfilling their potential.
- A shared vocabulary for non-specialists and VI specialist education professionals.

- Clarity and consistency in the quality of specialist provision for all children and young people with a VI across the UK in education.
- Access to shared resources providing greater and more effective sharing of teaching resources and strategies between professionals across the sector.
- Understanding by non-VI education professionals of what constitutes good VI provision and their role in facilitating that.

Is the new framework relevant for use across the UK?

The new framework has been developed through consultation across the UK, ensuring representation of specialist colleagues from within each of the devolved nations. Consultation has included:

- Ensuring UK-wide representation on our Delphi panel.
- Clarifying that language used is approved and relevant across all nations.
- Ensuring the high-level core outcomes are applicable across all national contexts in the UK.
- Clarifying that its content is independent of national policy.
- Recognising the presence of differing models of service delivery.

In addition to the consultation itself, the management of the project has included collaboration with professionals working for major sector organisations and networks across the UK that include: Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB); The Professional Association for the Vision Impairment Education Workforce (VIEW); Guide Dogs UK; Thomas Pocklington Trust; Scottish Association for Visual Impairment Education (SAVIE); Welsh Association of Vision Impairment Educators (WAVIE); Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI); LOOK; VICTA; HabVIUK; UCL Institute of Education (IOE); New College Worcester (NCW); National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP); Heads of Sensory Services (HoSS); University of Birmingham Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR); Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC); University of Edinburgh; Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust; School of Optometry and Vision Science, University of Bradford.

How will the framework help children and young people with a vision impairment?

As noted previously, the framework clarifies and defines the elements of specialist skill development, interventions and best practice support that are essential for all CYPVI across the whole range of abilities and needs.

The framework will support the emotional wellbeing of CYPVI and provide them with a clear understanding of additional outcomes as well as equipping them with the skills that can ensure they progress into adulthood with confidence and with the ability to access information and use technology, get about independently, interact confidently with others and an ambitious understanding of their own potential.

The framework can assist specialist practitioners to raise the awareness of non-VI professionals, such as teachers, of the need for CYPVI to be taught skills by specialists that enable them to access the curriculum and the wider world with increasing independence. The framework can also aid discussions around how and when these skills can be delivered by specialists and reinforced by non-specialists.

How will the framework help parents of children and young people with a vision impairment?

The framework enables parents to understand the pathways of support for their child and the services involved in providing that support within an agreed nationwide context. It provides a common language/shared vocabulary, enabling parents, VI professionals, classroom teachers and SEN officials to communicate more effectively when discussing a child's support needs.

This increased understanding of the areas of focus for a child's learning enables parents to feel more comfortable/confident when meeting professionals to discuss their child's progress. It can help parents to understand the long-term objectives of specialist professionals in helping the CYPVI maximise their independence, both in education and the wider world, in preparation for adulthood.

The framework also serves as a guide for parents when engaging with their child's activities at home as they learn new skills and knowledge.

So, to conclude the framework will:

- Help parents to understand what their child is learning/how specialists might be able to support their child.
- Assist parents in supporting their child's learning.

- Enable specialists/parents to have a shared understanding of positive outcomes for CYPVI.
- Provide parents and specialists with a common language around special skills teaching.
- Develop a shared understanding of purpose and organisation of special skills teaching.

How will the framework help professionals working in education with children and young people with a vision impairment?

Implementing a UK wide framework will allow colleagues across the sector to ensure that the support needs of CYPVI are being met across each outcome area as appropriate. The framework outcomes are intentionally high level and overarching to allow for services and schools to be able to adapt existing provision or develop new activities and resources to fit into these overarching core outcome areas. This continues to encourage flexibility of approach across the UK and embraces the degree of autonomy professionals currently have in designing successful, individualised provision for CYPVI.

The framework will therefore not provide the detail of how to deliver outcomes as this, along with resource allocation, remains at the discretion of the service or professional working with the CYPVI. This will ensure that support continues to be delivered on

the basis of individual need. Allocation of staffing and support levels will still be informed as they are now, e.g. by either NatSIP eligibility criteria and/or professional judgement. Rather the framework will offer a shared vocabulary for non-specialists and VI specialist education professionals across the UK for the first time, as well as identifying key outcomes for CYPVI from ages 0-25.

The framework and accompanying resource hub aim to encourage and support colleagues in VI education in sharing strategies and resources they have developed, by providing a free accessible online hub which they can upload resources to and use as a first point of reference for locating resources and information relevant to teaching the specialist curriculum skills. We hope this will encourage a knowledge sharing culture which will, in turn, save time, improve efficiency and provide a level of consistency in what is being taught across the UK. Over time development work within the broad framework areas can be used to further populate the framework and resource hub to create a repository of information for the sector. Here, colleagues will be able to draw on others' resources used to "populate" areas of the framework for their own service/setting. This will offer a freedom of choice as to how to deliver the areas across the UK.

The framework will be non-statutory in the first instance, however, we will be striving to achieve statutory or guidance status post launch to ensure that the core areas are recognised as essential, not optional skills that CYPVI must be taught in order to thrive, thus

supporting the need for specialist provision to be provided. As previously stated, it is our intention that the framework will sit alongside and be integrated with the academic curriculum to which all children and young people are entitled.

How has the new UK framework been developed?

A UK wide consultation was held over a period of 10 months, drawing upon experts across the VI education sector, representing different roles and types of expertise, as well as young people and parents.

In constructing the framework, colleagues from VICTAR, at the University of Birmingham have employed the use of the Delphi method for consultation purposes, a method that has been used for similar work in the USA. The Delphi approach is a method used to form a consensus on a complex topic. The British Psychological Society recommend a panel of between 10 and 50 participants ('panellists') when using the Delphi method. Participants are selected for their expertise on the topic and are surveyed or interviewed multiple times as part of the 'idea generation stage' and each time the outcomes of the consultation are refined until the point at which a common consensus is formed. If you are interested in finding out further information about the Delphi method then a useful resource can be found on The British Psychological Society Website (bit.ly/3GFKKk8)

50 representatives took part from across the home nations of the UK in keeping with this recommendation.

Stage 1 of the consultation began in February 2021, following a rigorous process to identify representatives for the expert panels of professionals, as well as young people and parent/carer representatives. Ensuring fair representation across the UK which was reflective of the range of professionals working with children and young people with vision impairment, and their caseloads was crucial. The section: **'What organisations / partners were instrumental in the development of the framework?'** provides further detail of contributing organisations. VICTAR worked closely with the Project Management and Reference Groups to outline the types of roles, professional expertise and settings which should be represented, and reviewed responses submitted to an expression of interest questionnaire in order to identify a good fit for the identified profiles. When selecting panel members, a range of factors were considered to ensure good representation across the sector, including:

- Country in which based (ensuring good representation within the four home nations of the UK).
- Type of area worked in (rural, large city).
- Professional role (e.g. QTVI, RQHS, etc).
- Setting(s) worked in (e.g. early years, mainstream primary, mainstream primary with specialist unit etc).
- Number of years working with children and young people with a

vision impairment.

- Number of years relevant leadership experience.
- Whether maintaining an active caseload.
- Nature of caseload.
- Characteristics of individual (e.g. gender, whether has a disability, ethnicity).

There were three stages of the consultation:

Stage 1: Focus Groups

During the stage 1 consultation the project team conducted nine online focus groups, capturing the expert opinions of 50 panel members. These focus groups covered the following themes:

Specialist curriculum in the UK

- What specialist provision is currently available.
- Why specialist input is needed for CYPVI.
- Gaps in current provision which should be addressed.

Boundaries of areas/outcomes to be included

- Defining the different areas of the framework.
- Ensuring the framework meets the broad spectrum of needs of the cohort of CYPVI.
- Ensuring the framework is respectful of national contexts and cultural differences.

Naming the framework

- Suggestion and consideration of appropriate names for the framework taking into account its UK wide application.

After the focus groups were completed, verbatim transcripts were produced from the Zoom recordings. Members of the project team worked together to analyse the transcripts, first identifying key components of the framework through an inductive approach, and then drawing upon existing literature and curricula to help organise these into categories. Through this analysis 10 key areas of the framework were identified as well as sub-themes which are used to illustrate each of these areas.

Stages 2 and 3: Online Surveys

During stage 2, participants were presented with the initial outline of the framework which had been developed during stage 1. This included providing feedback on:

- The outcome areas identified.
- The title and description given to each outcome area.
- The examples given to illustrate each area.

Participants were also asked to consider potential use of the framework for different 'case studies' of children and young people to test its usability, before providing overall feedback and thoughts on the most appropriate name.

Why are we developing an online resource hub to accompany the framework?

When the idea of a single, UK wide specialist VI curriculum framework was first discussed, a number of QTVIs, services and schools approached us offering to share resources that they had already developed. Prior to the start of the project further consultation with the sector identified the need for resources to be available in a centralised place which could be used to either host resources created by the sector or signpost to resources which already exist: a resource hub.

The framework and accompanying resource hub aim to encourage and support colleagues in sharing strategies and resources they have developed with the wider sector by the provision of a free accessible online hub. Colleagues in the sector can upload resources to the hub and also use it as a first point of reference for locating resources and information relevant to the teaching of special skills.

It is hoped that this will encourage a knowledge sharing culture in the sector which will save time and improve the efficiency and consistency of what is being taught across the UK. We also hope to identify where there is a shortage of certain resources, e.g. in specific outcome areas, and over time to encourage development of new resources to fill the gaps.

What resources will be included within the hub and how can I contribute a resource?

The online resource hub will contain a wide range of resources that have relevance to each area of the framework. Indicative examples of resources include:

- a one-page document to help teach an aspect of independent living skills
- a scheme of work to support the teaching on use of a piece of assistive technology
- a series of materials that support assessment or outcomes setting
- progress trackers
- resource packs for teaching – e.g., braille, touch-typing
- checklists – e.g., exam equipment, transition, ICT, accessible classroom
- activity cards e.g., to support self-advocacy
- templates e.g., referral letters
- guides for parents e.g. understanding CVI

If you would like to share your ideas and resources for inclusion within the resource hub, we would love to hear from you. The more resources we can share and make available the easier, the more efficient we can be in delivering information and resources to the children and young people we support.

Please email us at: cypf@rnib.org.uk with the 'Subject' CFVI Resource(s).

- If you would like to provide resources but are unsure whether your resource would be of help to others, or if you think it may need some refining, please contact us for an initial chat as we have a helpful group of professionals from the field who are on hand to support you and offer advice or guidance if required.

What is the online resource hub and how do we access it?

The online professional resource hub hosts and signposts to resources and tools which can be used to support the delivery of the new framework in practice.

Through talking to specialist teachers for learners with VI, VIEW discovered that a wide range of resources and strategies are being developed to support the teaching of a specialist curriculum framework in individual VI services and schools across the UK. These initiatives are happening within individual local authority support services and schools for pupils with VI rather than as part of a wider, coherent strategy. We know that the teachers concerned are keen to share their ideas and resources and to learn from each other.

The Bookshare CFVI resource hub encourages and supports sector colleagues to be able to share tools and resources that have been

developed by individuals or services, with the wider sector. Users will be able to submit resources for upload to the site or recommend resources freely available that we can signpost to within each of the 11 CFVI areas.

We hope this will be embraced by the sector and used as a first point of reference for locating resources and information relevant to teaching of specialist curriculum skills. We wish to encourage a knowledge sharing culture which will in turn save time for those working with children and young people with a vision impairment and improve efficiency and consistency in what is being taught across the UK.

To access the CFVI Resource hub within RNIB Bookshare visit: bit.ly/3BdLoEv

What theoretical model underpins this framework?

Underpinning the framework is the Access to Learning-Learning to Access model as outlined in our introductory project material. This model is rooted in the belief that specialist support for children and young people with vision impairment should focus on two key outcomes as a route to social inclusion:

1. Access to learning: Ensuring all children and young people have fair and optimised access to education.
2. Learning to access: Ensuring all children and young people have opportunities to develop their own agency, voice and independence.

Through this model we can describe a progression whereby over time, the emphasis shifts from support being provided directly to the child/young person (captured as 'access to learning'), to them acquiring the skills enabling them to function with agency and independence (hence the notion of 'learning to access'). A key role of carers and educators (including specialist educators) is to manage this progression through structuring an environment that helps promote learning and access whilst also seeking to ensure that appropriate individual skills are developed. It is recognised that this balance will vary for different children and their developmental age.

The model and the framework seek to be inclusive and celebrate access and agency in all its forms. This is true whether this is early reaching or expressions of awareness and choice in young and developmentally young children, or using mobile braille technology to help navigate a complex city environment.

You can read more about this model within the following:

- McLinden, M., Douglas, G., Cobb, R., Hewett, R., Ravenscroft, J. (2016). **'Access to learning' and 'learning to access': Analysing the distinctive role of specialist teachers of children and young people with vision impairments in facilitating curriculum access through an ecological systems theory.** British Journal of Visual Impairment, 34(2), 177-195. (bit.ly/3AUhOni)
- Douglas, G., McLinden, M., Ellis, E., Hewett, R., Wooten, A., Ware, J., &

Williams, L. (2019). **A rapid evidence assessment of the effectiveness of educational interventions to support children and young people with vision impairment.** Welsh Government, GSR report number 39/2019. (bit.ly/3IWKgrq)

- Keil, S. & Cobb, R. (2019). **Learning to Access: Why we need a new UK specialist curriculum to enable equitable participation in education for children and young people with vision impairment.** VIEW discussion paper. VIEW. (bit.ly/32U9yXX)

What are the key framework outcome areas?

Within the broad philosophy of the Access to Learning – Learning to Access model, the following eleven areas of the framework have been developed:

- Area 1: Facilitating an Inclusive World
- Area 2: Sensory Development
- Area 3: Communication
- Area 4: Literacy
- Area 5: Habilitation: Orientation and Mobility
- Area 6: Habilitation: Independent Living skills
- Area 7: Accessing Information
- Area 8: Technology
- Area 9: Health: Social, Emotional, Mental and Physical Wellbeing
- Area 10: Social, Sports and Leisure
- Area 11: Preparing for Adulthood

Each of the areas seeks to capture the important parts of the educational experience of children with vision impairment and associated educational outcomes. Each area is described in greater detail within the framework itself.

What initial steps can I begin to take to implement the new framework within my existing workplace/service?

The obvious starting point is the sharing of the new framework with colleagues and becoming familiar with “titles”/language of each of the 11 areas, and what they encompass.

- It would then be helpful to undertake an informal audit of how the 11 areas are currently represented/delivered within your school/service. You can consider for example, what you have called these previously and whether there are any gaps.
- You can then undertake an audit of existing teaching resources, placing them into the relevant areas of the framework.
- You may wish to consider how recommendations and outcomes/targets for children and young people could be written, using the language of the framework areas.
- Finally, you can consider changing school/service paperwork to incorporate the language of the framework/interventions appropriate to a framework area.

How can the progress of children and young people be tracked against the new framework?

At present the framework is not designed to be used in this way. In phase 2 of the project (2022-2025), we will be exploring how the framework and related outcomes can possibly provide a method of tracking young people's progress.

How is the new framework different / preferable to those currently in use across the UK?

The importance of a specialist framework which captures the distinctive skills required by this group has been widely recognised within the vision impairment education field for many years. However, to date, there has been no universally recognised specialist framework for children and young people with vision impairment in a UK context. This can lead to a lack of clarity about what should be taught and by whom and inconsistent educational offers with different stakeholders finding it difficult to communicate with one another using a shared language.

The CFVI forms a strong foundation for achieving equitable entitlement for children and young people with vision impairment across the UK by clarifying and defining the elements of specialist skill development, interventions and best practice that can be discussed by all using a shared vocabulary, whilst Area 1 of the framework is unique in its emphasis on facilitating a more inclusive world. We hope that uptake of one framework within the field in the UK will provide a sound basis on which to seek statutory status.

How will the framework be evaluated?

The framework will be evaluated in several ways. Quantitative evaluation will look at familiarity, use and downloads of the framework and resources. Over the course of phase 2 of the project, 2022-2025, the qualitative impact of the framework will be evaluated using a range of methods including case study research.

What organisations / partners were instrumental in the development of the framework?

In addition to all our consultation participants, throughout the duration of phase 1 of project, we have engaged with the following organisations and networks to support the development of the CFVI:

- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
- University of Birmingham Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR)
- The Professional Association for the Vision Impairment Education Workforce (VIEW)
- Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT)
- Scottish Association for Visual Impairment Education (SAVIE)
- Guide Dogs UK

- Welsh Association of Vision Impairment Educators (WAVIE)
- Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI)
- LOOK
- VICTA
- HabVIUK
- UCL Institute of Education (IOE)
- New College Worcester (NCW)
- National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP)
- Heads of Sensory Services (HoSS)
- Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC)
- University of Edinburgh
- Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust
- School of Optometry and Vision Science, University of Bradford.

Further questions?

If you have any further questions regarding the development of the framework, please contact us at: **cypf@rnib.org.uk**

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