



Looking Forward

A free counselling service and peer support programme for older people (aged 60 plus) affected by sight loss

RNIB
Northern
Ireland

Supporting people
with sight loss



LOTTERY FUNDED

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Let's talk about it

If you have lost or are losing your sight, you may be worried about how you will cope. Or you may feel depressed about the changes you are facing. Perhaps you are experiencing feelings of sadness, anger or anxiety and this is affecting you on a day-to-day basis. Or maybe it's causing you to worry about the future.

During these times, many people find it helpful to talk through their feelings with someone outside their usual circle of family and friends. Our counselling service offers six sessions of face-to-face counselling, to help you get through these times. At present this service is available throughout Northern Ireland.

The Looking Forward Project is funded by The Big Lottery Fund and we are working in partnership with the following key organisations: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Western Health and Social Care Trust and Good Morning Northern Ireland Network.

Looking Forward aims to provide practical and emotional support to blind or partially sighted people (aged 60 plus) at greatest risk of isolation or exclusion. The project will use the following two approaches:

- **Counselling (six face-to-face sessions with a trained counsellor).**
- **Peer support programme.**

What is counselling?

Counselling means talking things over with a skilled listener and it can help you understand your feelings and think about ways of coping with the changes in your life. Counselling is not direct advice, but help to explore your situation so that you can work out what is right for you.

Is counselling right for me?

Sight loss is different for everyone. Some people will want to get practical things sorted out before they can think about how they feel, whilst others will not be able to make use of practical support until they have begun to deal with their feelings. Some people will want to tackle both things together.

About us

We are a team of trained counsellors with experience in support, information and counselling. We will offer you:

- **six one hour face-to-face counselling sessions to talk about your situation and how you're feeling**
- **peer support which will offer ongoing practical and emotional support.**

RNIB Northern Ireland's counselling service is committed to a working practice that values equality and diversity. Sight loss does not discriminate and neither do we.

About counselling and support

Your counsellor will discuss and agree the number of sessions with you – usually six sessions.

Once we have your details, we will contact you to arrange a telephone appointment with one of our counsellors. We aim to make contact with you within five working days of receiving your details, although it may take longer at busy times, or if it is difficult to contact you.

If you go on to have counselling from our service, the sessions will be arranged at mutually convenient times and will always be with the same counsellor.

Although we do not have a crisis line, or offer befriending we can give information about other services and help in contacting them.

If you need to speak to someone urgently, both the Samaritans and Lifeline are available 24 hours a day on the following numbers:

- **Samaritans 0845 790 9090**
- **Lifeline 0808 808 8000**

About peer support

Sometimes you might find it helpful to explore ways forward in your life by meeting with someone over a cup of coffee, or within a small group of people in a similar situation. In a supportive setting, you will be able to:

- **talk about the way you feel**
- **share your experiences with others in similar circumstances**
- **explore what is not working for you and how to support you towards making it work**
- **improve and learn ways of dealing with difficult feelings related to sight loss.**



Confidentiality

Our service is completely confidential. This means that what you say to us will remain within the counselling service and will not be passed on to anyone else without your consent.

The only exception to this is if we have very serious concerns about your safety or that of others. In such exceptional circumstances we might need to ensure your safety, but would strive to discuss this with you and assist you in seeking emergency support. We adhere to the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework and comply with the Data Protection Act.

No cost

There is no cost to you for the service.

“It has been a wonderful experience. I hope other people will have a chance to engage in peer support so that they will know they are not the only one and can talk it through with others.”

Richard, aged 64,
service user Belfast

Getting in touch

You can get in touch with our counselling service by calling RNIB Northern Ireland on 028 9032 9373 and ask to be put through to the counselling team. Alternatively you can email us directly at: lookingforward@rnib.org.uk

Further information

Looking Forward Project
RNIB Northern Ireland
Victoria House,
15-17 Gloucester Street
Belfast BT1 4LS
028 9032 9373
lookingforward@rnib.org.uk

Other sources of help

**British Association for
Counselling and Psychotherapy**
01455 883 300
bacp.co.uk

**Good Morning
Northern Ireland Network**
NCM House
218 York Street
Belfast BT15 1GY
028 9075 1070
info@goodmorningnetwork.co.uk

Samaritans
0845 790 9090
samaritans.org

LifeLine
0808 808 8000

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