

The VISAL Toolkit

Learning to live with age-related sight loss

What is Visal (Visually Impaired Seniors Active Learning)

The Visal toolkit was produced as part of the European Visal project. The aim of Visal is to encourage and enable older people with sight loss to participate actively and have a voice in their local communities.

How the toolkit works

The toolkit offers a step-by-step guide to planning, organising and delivering a VISAL programme to help a group of older people with sight loss to gain confidence and skills. The programme has been piloted and evaluated and the sessions are described below.

The programme of VISAL sessions

The programme is divided into seven sessions held on a regular basis with the same group of participants. Each session should last around two and a half hours, and ideally a group should consist of between eight and 12 people.

Session one – Getting to know you

- Listening to and understanding me, the individual
- Listening to others
- When I listen to others they will listen to me

Session two – My circles of influence

- Understanding who is important to me
- Knowing and experiencing the potential of being connected
- Determining types of relationships and individual choices

Session three – Choices within the close circle

- Knowing I have a choice
- Positive benefits of choosing what I want
- My choices are important

Session four – Doing it together

- The importance of being a member of a group and working together
- The positives of belonging
- We can achieve more together than on our own

Session five – Influencing professionals and service providers

- Who are the professionals or services that I can challenge?
- Opportunities for help
- I can bring about real change

Session six – Decision-makers and influence

- Understanding who makes the rules and how
- Finding my way through the jungle of rules
- My voice counts

Session seven – Reflecting, evaluating and taking things forward

- Confirming the circle of influence
- Confidence to tackle the barriers
- Looking forward to the future



Supporting people
with sight loss



What VISAL can do for you

The programme has been designed as a journey. It aims to support facilitators of the programme to support older people with sight loss gain increased wellbeing, self-confidence and civic engagement. The sessions also use the concept of having circles of influence placing the person at the centre. This person-centred approach enables an individual to develop motivation at their own speed and comfort, unpicking barriers and identifying opportunities for engagement.

The VISAL toolkit gives organisations the means to reach out to an often isolated and hard to reach group of people in society.

The method outlined in the toolkit has been refined by the project partners over a two-year period and is the result of a European-wide collaboration. The shared feedback from this cross-cultural interaction adds value to the toolkit.

The VISAL toolkit is available at rnib.org.uk/olderpeople

The VISAL website

A range of additional resources are available on the VISAL project website, including a “train the trainer” manual, photos, videos and testimonials as well as additional exercises which can be used during VISAL sessions. For more information go to www.visal-project.eu

The VISAL team is a consortium of partners from five European countries:



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