

R N I B

See differently

Starting Out

Emotional Support



About this guide

If you have lost or are losing your sight, you may be experiencing difficult thoughts and feelings – such as shock, anger, fear, sadness or loss and worrying about how you will cope or feeling depressed about the changes you are facing. If you are the close relative or carer of a person who has lost or is losing their sight, you might be trying to cope with your thoughts and feelings about the situation.

This leaflet is about recognising and dealing with the emotions that can come from losing your sight, whether recently or long ago. We give ideas about ways you might deal with these, including counselling and emotional support, as well as alternatives such as peer support and befriending services. We also offer a free counselling service of up to eight sessions. Please call our Helpline for further details.

There is plenty of help out there and this leaflet will guide you through the options.

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

Contents

- 2 About this guide**
- 5 Diagnosis**
- 9 Common feelings and emotions**
- 14 Coping with feelings**
- 16 Available support**
- 36 Further information**
- 40 Glossary**
- 42 RNIB Booklet Series**



Diagnosis

It can be traumatic to be diagnosed with a sight condition, be told that you have an additional eye condition, or to be told that your existing sight has deteriorated. Each person's experience is different, and they will respond differently.

If your sight condition has developed suddenly, you may have hoped that it could be cured or improve significantly after treatment. It can be a shock however if, following diagnosis, you are told that the treatments might only help to maintain your remaining vision, or that there is no further treatment to help you. Your eye specialist may even have warned you that your eye condition could deteriorate, as some can.

When you receive your diagnosis, you may be too distressed to ask questions about your eye condition. These questions may include how your sight is likely to change or develop, and how it may affect you, potential treatments and a prognosis. If necessary, you should be able to ask these questions at a further appointment. There may also be printed information available at the clinic about your eye condition for you to take away to read.

You can also contact our Helpline for more information about your eye condition.

Getting support

There is often support available both at the point of and following diagnosis. Some clinics have a sight loss adviser (also known as an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, ECLO or Vision Support Officer) available. They can provide individual advice, emotional support and information. This could be given at your first clinic appointment, following diagnosis, or at a later appointment. They can also help and advice you over the telephone and via email.

Sight loss advisers can give you information about common eye conditions and their treatments and refer you back to medical staff for more complex questions. Sight loss advisers can tell you where to get the help you need or can make referrals on your behalf to help you access welfare benefits and concessions, employment advice and emotional support. They can also put you in touch with voluntary organisations and local support groups, including your local society for people with sight loss. They can explain the process of becoming registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired, and the benefits of being registered.

If your eye clinic doesn't have a sight loss adviser, you may be able to get information and support from your ophthalmic nurse. At RNIB, we have specialist eye health advisers who can tell you more about your eye condition and send you detailed information in a format you can read. They are very knowledgeable about sight loss and various eye conditions, including those which are less commonly diagnosed. If you would like to speak to us, please call our Helpline.



Common feelings and emotions

If you are dealing with sight loss, it may help you to know that you are not alone in the emotions that you are feeling, other people are going through, and have been through, similar experiences.

These feelings may develop following deterioration in an existing sight condition or after sudden sight loss, caused for example by an accident. The feelings may not necessarily come on suddenly but may be formed around the realisation that you feel different or that society treats you differently, or that you sense a social stigma related to a disability such as sight loss and it may even be a response to life events and experiences. Examples include situations where a young adult with sight loss is unable to move out of the family home as quickly as they would like to, due to difficulties with living independently; or when a person who has lost their sight finds that they are no longer able to remain in their current employment.

The Bereavement Cycle

Sight loss can be compared to other significant losses in life. The feelings you have may mirror those of someone who is going through a bereavement. There may be the loss of previous abilities, such as driving, recognising people in the street, or engaging in a favourite hobby.

As with any other loss, you will need time to move beyond your grief, and adjust to life following the loss. This could involve finding practical ways of coping with your new circumstances, such as taking up different hobbies. But your feelings cannot always be dealt with by making practical changes alone. You may decide that you need professional support to get through the process. The cycle of emotions you may experience includes; shock, denial, anger, fear, anxiety and depression, as well as the grief and feelings of loss.

You are likely to feel shock after sudden sight loss, or if you have been used to living with an eye condition that then worsens. You may have been most concerned with your diagnosis and treatment and found that things happened too quickly for you to fully comprehend its meaning.

It is common to disbelieve or try to deny what has happened. You might try to carry on as

before and to act and behave as if your vision has not changed. This is a normal stage in gradually coming to terms with sight loss and accepting that you will need to find ways to adjust to your situation.

Anger is a natural reaction to the development or deteriorating of a sight condition, especially when it has a significantly negative impact on your circumstances. You may experience feelings of anger towards those around you, such as your partner, relatives or friends. You may also feel anger towards the professionals involved in your treatment, perhaps believing that more could or should have been done to treat your sight condition. You may even be angry with yourself and wonder if there was something that you could have done to prevent your sight condition.

After accepting and moving past your anger, you may accept that no one, including yourself, is to blame for your circumstances, and that these cannot be changed. Following acceptance of this you may feel fear and anxiety about your future, how you will cope, and worry about the activities that you can no longer do independently. But anxiety is a natural reaction. It can remind you that you should take care until you learn new ways to deal with your circumstances.

You may be experiencing sadness and grief. These feelings can seem overwhelming but, as with grief that occurs in other circumstances, it is likely that with time these feelings will affect you less frequently. Sight loss is a major life event, so you are likely to need time to manage and come to terms with it. However, if sadness and grief persist for several weeks or more, you may be experiencing depression. Symptoms may include experiencing the following feelings persistently: unable to get up or to eat normally; disturbed sleep; and feeling that you don't want to see friends or family. If this happens, you should seek help. You might want to approach your GP in the first instance (see 'How to access counselling', later in the booklet). Getting help is even more important if you have any thoughts of harming yourself.

Moving forward

Hopefully, with professional or other help, you can find ways to deal with the emotional impact and practical implications of your sight loss – these two aspects are interrelated.

You are likely to have to adjust how you perceive yourself, as you may no longer be able to do the things you did previously. Being able to develop practical techniques and strategies to help you readjust to life with sight loss and to manage your daily life, can help you recognise and acknowledge your ability to cope. It can also help you to regain the self-esteem that may have been damaged following your diagnosis or the realisation that your sight loss is permanent.

This cycle of emotions is unlikely to be experienced in a neat order; it may be more haphazard and will take longer to work through for some people than for others. Your ability to adjust to living with sight loss is likely to be affected by various factors including how long you have lived with a degree of sight loss, your age when sight loss began, the extent of your remaining vision, and support from others such as relatives, friends and professionals.

Coping with feelings

If you feel that you could benefit from support to manage and cope with your feelings following sight loss, there is help Available. Seeking and accepting support is a healthy and normal response to such a life-changing situation and isn't a sign of weakness or failure. Many people who experience difficulties in their life, including other life-changing events, such as a bereavement or the breakdown of a long-term relationship look for help to manage and work through their emotions, often by seeking support such as counselling, as with sight loss, they are partly about dealing with loss.



However, there are many aspects in coping with feelings and people respond differently. If you don't feel it's right for you, you do not have to seek professional help to manage your emotions. You might for example, find that the love and support of a partner, relatives and friends is all that you need to cope. You might find that you want to try and return to as normal a routine as you can. This could include trying to quickly get help to deal with any practical difficulties that arise after sight loss. You may want to re-focus on your job or career, or your hobbies and leisure time. Again, this may involve you, where necessary, looking into practical approaches you need to make in order to manage these parts of your life.

Even if you do not wish or feel the need to get help to cope with your feelings soon after experiencing sight loss, you will still be able to get support if you feel differently later.

Available support

There are different types of support available. These are often grouped under the name 'talking therapies'. Counselling is a specific type of therapy, although this word is also often used to cover various types of talking therapies. Other forms of available therapy include; cognitive behavioural therapies (CBT), psychotherapy, humanistic therapies, mindfulness-based therapies and group counselling. These therapies are generally well structured, consisting of discussion with the client about the goals they would like to achieve, what will be involved in the therapy and how long it is likely to last.

Emotional support is another type of support but is less formal than the therapies mentioned above. It can involve the person in need of support talking in an unstructured way about anything they choose to. It may also involve the supporter asking simple questions such as how the other person is feeling and listening to their response.

There are various providers of talking therapies and emotional support services. See 'Further information' later in the booklet.

Counselling

When you are going through a major life change, such as sight loss, it can be helpful to talk it through with someone who is outside your usual circle of friends and family. This can make it easier to share difficult thoughts and feelings. Counselling involves talking through these, usually with a professionally trained counsellor. An aim of counselling is to help you to explore and understand your feelings in a safe and confidential environment, and to think about ways of coping with the changes in your life. It is not about telling you what to do. The focus is on helping you to discuss and explore your situation so that you can work out what is right for you and what might help you.

You can usually expect to go for several regular sessions of counselling before you start to notice a difference in how you feel.

How counselling works

Most counselling is based on seeing the same counsellor once a week for up to one hour. It may last for a fixed number of sessions, or it may be open-ended and you and the counsellor would decide between you when to finish.

Some counsellors use the telephone, video conference or email rather than face-to-face sessions. A few counsellors can arrange to visit you at home if you have mobility difficulties, but most work from a fixed venue.

Your counselling sessions are confidential, and your counsellor will not share what is said in your sessions with anyone without your agreement. The only exception to this is if the counsellor has concerns about your safety. The expectations about confidentiality will be discussed with you during your first counselling session.

A counsellor is trained to listen with empathy (by putting themselves in your shoes). They will try to help you deal with any negative thoughts and feelings. Counsellors have training in their field and have a professional qualification, so they should have knowledge and experience of helping people deal with change and loss. This is important when counselling people who are experiencing sight loss. If you wish to, you can ask your counsellor about their qualifications and experience.

Your counsellor should be a member of a professional body (such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy or the

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy), which has a code of conduct and a complaints system. They (or their agency) should also have professional indemnity insurance. A counsellor should give you information about their service, code of confidentiality and complaints system, in your preferred format.

What to expect from counselling

During your counselling sessions, you will be encouraged to express your emotions freely. By discussing your concerns with you, the counsellor can help you to gain a better understanding of your feelings and thought processes, as well as identifying ways of finding your own solutions to problems.



The counsellor might encourage you to identify issues that are holding you back and, if appropriate, take personal responsibility for them. They will be able to help you recognise the effects that other people and their actions have on you and explore alternative ways of coping with them. It can be a great relief to share your worries and fears with someone who acknowledges your feelings and is able to help you reach a positive solution.

During your first counselling session you are likely to discuss various initial points with your counsellor, including why you are seeking counselling, what you want to get out of or achieve from it, and how you will work together. Your counsellor will want to check that they can support you appropriately and may think that there could be a different and more appropriate therapy available for your situation and should be able to give you some advice about this.

After your first session if you decide that you do not want to continue with counselling or continue seeing that counsellor, it is entirely acceptable. You may wish to speak to several counsellors before you decide which one you feel most comfortable working with.

Once you and your preferred counsellor have agreed that the therapy may be beneficial to you, you should discuss and agree on how you will work together and how often you will meet. Your counsellor might draw up a written 'therapeutic contract' and should give you a copy in your preferred format. You can refer to this during the period of your counselling to remind you what was agreed during your first session.

How to access counselling

There are many ways you can access counselling services. You could initially discuss how you feel with your GP, who can refer you for free NHS counselling. This may be at your GP's surgery, or at another NHS clinic, or provided by a local counsellor who works with NHS patients. The number of sessions with an NHS counsellor will usually be limited. Your GP might also suggest a local private therapist, who will charge a fee (often negotiable) and will offer unlimited sessions. You could possibly access free counselling from other sources, such as your employer, or trade union. Some local and national charitable organisations offer counselling services, as do some local societies for blind and partially sighted people. Other voluntary counselling organisations in your area may also be able to help.

If your GP diagnoses you with depression, they should discuss your treatment options, which may include a course of anti-depressant medication. But your GP should consider your opinion about the kind of help and treatment you feel is most appropriate for your circumstances.

If you believe that you may be experiencing depression, you should try to see your GP as soon as possible.

Whether or not you are experiencing depression, you might prefer to seek the help of a counsellor in private practice without a referral from your GP. You will have to pay for this, but there are some free counselling services, such as our Counselling and Wellbeing service (see the section on 'Available support').

The cost of counselling varies according to where you live and the experience of the counsellor. Some charities offer low-cost or sliding scale charges based on income and some therapists adjust their fees according to your income.



Telephone counselling and support

It is possible to get emotional support or carry out your counselling sessions over the telephone. This can be more convenient for some blind and partially sighted people, as you do not need to worry about traveling to an unfamiliar place. It may also be the most practical option if you live in a remote location and do not have a counsellor located nearby. Another advantage of telephone counselling is that it can be easier to fit around your work or home life. But not all counsellors or counselling services offer their services over the telephone, and you may prefer to meet your counsellor face-to-face, in a private space where you know that you cannot be distracted or disturbed by anything else.

Generally, it is more common for telephone counselling to be provided by charitable organisations, although some private counsellors also offer it. Although it is likely to feel different to face-to-face meetings, counselling over the telephone should be the same in terms of its content and what you discuss with the counsellor.

Online counselling

With online counselling, you can access the support you need via your laptop or smartphone. As with telephone counselling, this will offer greater accessibility if you live in a remote location or have mobility issues. You can arrange to exchange therapeutic emails with your counsellor, typically on a weekly basis. You can usually send your weekly email whenever you want, day or night, and will receive an email back from your counsellor at an agreed time/day. Alternatively, you can have live sessions with your counsellor via video (Skype or similar) or text (instant messaging).

If you choose online counselling, please make sure that the counsellor or counselling service you approach provide security and confidentiality and that your computer is password protected and has security software. You should also ensure you have a private space where you can communicate with your counsellor without distractions.

Counselling and Wellbeing Team

Our Counselling and Wellbeing Team offers free confidential telephone and online counselling to people experiencing emotional difficulties as

a result of sight loss. We give you time to talk about your situation and how you are feeling. The team will help you to identify what you need and the best way to get it.

We offer one-to-one telephone and online counselling via email, video or instant messaging. As well as giving you the opportunity to work through some of your feelings and gaining support, our counselling may help you consider new ways of adapting to sight loss. The total number of sessions vary but are usually up to a maximum of eight. We can also help you find support in your local area through agencies offering specific services such as counselling, befriending, or support groups.



The service is confidential; what you say to our team will remain within the service and will not be shared without your consent. The only exception would be if we had serious concerns about your safety or that of others.

Call our Helpline or email cwt@rnib.org.uk to be referred to our Counselling and Wellbeing Team. Referrals and self-referrals can be made to the service from Monday to Friday, 8.45am to 5.30pm.

If you would like online counselling, you can also self-refer directly by visiting our website and completing an online agreement form. Visit **rnib.org.uk/online-counselling-form**.

With telephone counselling, our administrator will usually phone you to book an assessment session with a counsellor within five working days (although it may take longer at busy times). The assessment will be a chance to talk about your situation and to explore what further support could be helpful. Any further sessions will be arranged at mutually convenient times.

Both online and telephone counselling are provided free of charge.

The service is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). We are also bound by its 'Ethical framework for the Counselling Professions' and are subject to the Professional Conduct Procedure.

Telephone support groups

Our Counselling and Wellbeing Team also runs telephone support groups called 'Seeing it through: exploring thoughts and feelings about sight loss'. These groups offer the opportunity to speak with people in a similar situation, if you are finding it difficult to live with your sight loss and might find it helpful to explore ways to move forward in your life.

These groups take place in a supportive environment, a counsellor will facilitate a small group, in which you'll be able to:

- talk about the way you feel
- share your experiences with others who are in similar circumstances
- explore what's not working for you and how to make it work
- improve and learn ways of dealing with difficult feelings related to sight loss.

The support groups usually run for eight weekly meetings over the phone. There will be a maximum of five people participating and each session will last about an hour. Every week, the facilitator will get in touch with each participant over the phone at a pre-agreed time before opening the meeting.

Although we do not offer long-term support or befriending, if you want to join a telephone social group, we can direct you to our Tele-befriending service.

Our telephone support groups are free, including costs of the phone calls.

To find out more about telephone support groups please contact the Counselling and Wellbeing Team. You can do this by calling our Helpline or by emailing cwt@rnib.org.uk. You will be contacted within a week to book an initial assessment with a counsellor, who will explain in more detail what the group is about. This call will be a chance to discuss your individual circumstances and establish whether this type of support is appropriate for you.

Peer support

Peer support generally refers to getting help, advice and support from other people who have experienced or are going through sight loss. You may also be able to give your own tips for managing sight loss.

Although you might talk with other blind and partially sighted people about your own feelings, peer support is not a replacement for more formal services such as counselling. If you would like to talk in confidence about your personal feelings it might not, by itself, meet your emotional needs. You may therefore want to also consider options for counselling or emotional support.

Peer support programmes

Meeting with other people affected by sight loss can be a great way to build confidence and learn how to overcome everyday challenges. No matter how long you have been dealing with sight loss, a support programme provides an opportunity to share both challenges and solutions with people in a similar situation.

Loved ones and family members may also have the chance to take part and gain support in the same way. Learning that you are not alone

and hearing how others have solved problems can help you to feel more confident about your future.

The Living Well With Sight Loss course takes place one day a week over several weeks, in partnership with other local and national specialist organisations. The course addresses the emotional aspects of sight loss with sessions on coping mechanisms, problem solving, and information and advice on local and national support services. The course also explores practical solutions to everyday tasks, including technology. Where possible, group sessions are facilitated by blind and partially sighted people. Both courses aim to increase levels of confidence in order to overcome challenges relating to mobility and everyday living. Some local sight loss charities also offer their own support programmes like Finding Your Feet.

For more information on the Living Well With Sight Loss course contact our Helpline.

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

RNIB Tele-befriending service

One option for peer support is our Tele-befriending service, a chat over the telephone with a small group of other people affected by sight loss. Participants talk about a wide variety of subjects, and they give each other encouragement. It's a free service from the RNIB for adults with sight loss from across the UK. There may be a call cost for the short weekly call, but this will depend on your phone package.

Groups meet over the telephone, at the same time each week for 55 minutes. Groups run between 9.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. The groups are usually up to 8 people and are hosted by a trained volunteer who will make sure that everyone has an opportunity to talk and feels comfortable to join in the group discussion. The groups are informal, fun and friendly and do not have a set agenda. Participants enjoy talking about everything from their families and current affairs to reminiscing and politics. As part of talking about their daily lives, participants encourage each other and exchange useful information about living with sight loss.

Groups will be connected using an online app for those who have access to a computer or smart phone or alternatively a more traditional style

tele-befriending. Individuals can dial into their weekly call or we can connect them if needed.

A variety of people take part and this is considered when matching people to a suitable group.

At the end of the 12 weeks, each person will be encouraged to remain connected with their peers, if they wish to do so, this may be independently or through the Talk and Support service.

To join a group, please contact
Talk and Support by emailing
cwt@rnib.org.uk or call either
020 7391 2218 or **0845 330 3723**.

Support for children and young people

If you are a child or young person with sight loss or going through sight loss, you are likely to experience some of the emotions and feelings described previously in this booklet. However, you may find it even harder than blind and partially sighted adults to find people to talk to who understand what you are going through. You might have been bullied because of your disability, or you might be worried about being independent and doing all the things you would like to do. Maybe you are fed up of being a bit different from your friends.

If you are aged 11-18 years, we may be able to help. You can contact our Counselling and Wellbeing Team. If anything connected with your sight loss makes you worried, unhappy, stressed, or unsure of what to do, you can get in touch.

We have counsellors who work with young people and you can refer yourself or be referred to them for a one-off talk, or for a series of sessions with the same counsellor. Everything you tell the counsellors remains confidential, so no one else will be contacted, including your parents. The main exception to this is if the counsellor thought that you were at risk of harm.

You do not need to worry about any cost as the calls to the service are free. Contact our Helpline or email **cwt@rnib.org.uk**.

If you are a school, college or university student, there may be a counselling service available (sometimes part of student welfare or advice services). Also, many other counselling services specialise in working with young people (up to age 20, or sometimes 25). You can find out what is available locally from **youthaccess.org.uk** or by calling **020 8772 9900**.

Information for parents, friends and family

The LOOK Helpline from the National Federation of Families with Visually Impaired Children provides practical advice and emotional support, information about your child's condition and contact with other families with similar problems. Call **01432 376314**, email information@look-uk.org or visit **look-uk.org**.

Guide Dogs can also provide practical support and advice, and put you in touch with support groups made up of other parents of children

with sight loss. Call **0800 781 1444** or visit **guidedogs.org.uk**.

Connect with others

Meet or connect with others who are blind or partially sighted online, by phone or in your community to share interests, experiences and support for each other. From book clubs and social groups to sport and volunteering, our friendly, helpful and knowledgeable team can link you up with opportunities to suit you. Visit rnib.org.uk/connect or call **0303 123 9999**.

Further information

RNIB Helpline

Our Helpline is your direct line to the information, support, advice and products you need, including getting referred to the Counselling and Wellbeing Team. Call **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

Specialist interest groups

There are various support groups for people with a particular eye condition, for example macular degeneration or glaucoma. Many of these run telephone helplines or have networks of self-help groups around the country. Contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** to find out if there is an organisation covering your condition.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

BACP can provide details of private counsellors in your area. All counsellors on their list are trained and are required to adhere to a code of ethics. Counsellors can specify areas of interest, and those who list 'health related' or 'disability' might have more relevant experience. Call **01455 88 33 00** (general enquiries) or email **bacp@bacp.co.uk**.

Visit **bacp.co.uk** where you can search the 'Find a therapist' database. The website also gives useful background information on different styles of counselling. To search for a therapist, visit **bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists**

The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy

This national organisation can send you details of qualified and registered therapists in your area. Call **020 7014 9955**, email **info@ukcp.org.uk** or visit **ukcp.org.uk**.

Relate

An organisation providing counselling that can help if you wish to talk over any relationship difficulties. They can see you with your partner or by yourself. Call **0300 100 1234** for details of your local branch or visit **relate.org.uk**.

The Macular Society

They have a telephone counselling service for members, their friends, families and carers. Call **0300 3030 111**, email **info@macularsociety.org** or visit **macularsociety.org**.

Samaritans

They provide telephone support via trained volunteers 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. There are also some local branches. Call **116 123** (free number), email **jo@samaritans.org** or visit **samaritans.org**.

The Sane Helpline

A telephone helpline offering information and emotional support to anyone affected by mental health problems. The Sane Helpline has an information database of local and national mental health services, including talking therapies. Call **0300 304 7000**, email **info@sane.org.uk** or visit **sane.org.uk**

Signhealth

If you are deafblind you can contact Signhealth who provide accessible counselling for the deaf community including those with both hearing and sight loss. Call **0149 468 7600** (telephone), **0149 468 7626** (textphone), send a text to **0796 697 6749** or fax **0149 468 7622**. You can also email **info@signhealth.org.uk** or visit **signhealth.org.uk**

No Panic

A charity which helps people who suffer from panic attacks, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders and other related anxiety disorders. It facilitates self-help through telephone recovery groups.

The Helpline is open from 10am-10pm every day on **0844 967 4848**. The Youth Helpline for 13 to 20-year-olds is open 3-6pm Monday to Friday and 6pm to 8pm Thursday and Saturday on **0330 606 1174**. You can also visit **nopanic.org.uk**

Sightline Directory

An online directory which will help you find services and support from national charities, local societies or befriending services. Visit **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**

Hospital eye clinics

Some hospital eye clinics provide an information or advice service on a regular basis, often run by the local voluntary society. Contact your local hospital or sight loss adviser for more information.

Glossary

We've used some terms which you might be unfamiliar with if you haven't had a low vision assessment before, so we've put together this glossary which you can refer to.

Ophthalmologists are specialist eye doctors who diagnose, treat and monitor eye conditions with medication and surgery. They usually work in hospital eye departments or clinics (often called ophthalmology departments).

Optometrists/opticians are qualified to examine your vision, prescribe glasses and detect eye conditions. Optometrists can detect eye conditions and refer you to an ophthalmologist for diagnosis and treatment if it is needed. Some optometrists may specialise in low vision and may help you with your low vision aids.

Optical magnifiers are magnifiers which use an optical lens to make things look bigger.

Video magnifiers use a camera which magnifies items so they appear larger and have the ability to adapt contrast or colour.

Focusing distance is the distance away from the magnifier that an object must be held or moved for it to be seen clearly.

Magnification level is the number of times bigger a magnifier makes an object or text look. For example, a 4x magnifier is a lens that makes the object look four times bigger when used correctly.

Optical aids are tools that involve the use of an optical lens such as magnifiers, spectacles or contact lenses.

Non-optical aids are equipment that is designed to help someone make the most of their sight or provide an alternative to using their sight.

These are items such as a large print newspaper or a talking clock.

RNIB Booklet Series

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. Titles include:

- Benefits, Concessions and Registration
- Emotional Support
- Employment
- Help from Social Services
- 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 include:

- Leisure
- Reading
- Shopping
- Travel
- Technology

About the Understanding Series

The Understanding series is designed to help you, your friends and family understand a little bit more about your eye condition. Titles include:

- Age Related Macular Degeneration
- Cataracts
- Charles Bonnet Syndrome
- Dry Eye
- Eye Conditions Related to Diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Nystagmus
- Retinal Detachment
- Retinal Pigmentosa
- Posterior Vitreous Detachment

All these leaflets 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 or to provide feedback on the Starting Out and Confident Living Series, please email **ckit@rnib.org.uk**

To provide feedback on the Understanding Series, please email **eyehealth@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. It is produced by RNIB in partnership with a number of other sight loss organisations **sightadvicefaq.org.uk**.

This leaflet has been produced the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

Printing of this booklet was supported by a grant from Allergan/AbbVie, who had no influence on the content.

Produced August 2020

Review date August 2021

PR12371P

ISBN 978-1-4445-0141-4

Ed 2

