

**RNIB**

See differently

Starting Out

# Emotional Support



## About this guide

If you have lost or are losing your sight, you might be experiencing difficult thoughts and feelings – such as shock, anger, fear, sadness or loss. You might be 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 feelings and emotions that can come from losing your sight, whether recently or long ago. We give ideas about the ways in which 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**

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# Diagnosis

It is likely to be a shock, and can be traumatic, to be diagnosed with a sight condition, or to be told that your existing sight condition has got worse. Different people have different experiences of receiving a diagnosis of a sight condition, and will respond differently. You may have had to see an eye specialist because you have recently developed a sight condition; or you may have had a sight condition for some time that has deteriorated; or perhaps you have developed an additional eye condition.

If your sight condition has developed suddenly, you may have hoped that it could be cured or would get significantly better 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 had to warn you that your eye condition could get worse, as some can do.

When you receive your diagnosis, you may be too distressed to ask questions about your eye condition. These questions may include how your eye condition 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 might 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. There might be a sight loss adviser (also known as an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, ECLO or Vision Support Officer) available at your eye clinic. The sight loss adviser 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 give you help and advice over the telephone and via email.

Sight loss advisers can give you information about common eye conditions and their treatments, and also 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 to you 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 also send you detailed information in a format you can read, to help you understand it better. They are very knowledgeable about sight loss and different eye conditions, including about the less commonly diagnosed conditions. 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 other people are going through, and have been through, similar experiences to your own. You may have similar feelings and emotions to those commonly felt by other people who have lost some or all of their sight.

These feelings may develop following deterioration in an existing sight condition or after sudden sight loss, caused for example by an accident. The feelings might not necessarily come on suddenly. They may be formed around the realisation that you feel different or that society treats you differently, or around your perception that there is a social stigma attached to a disability such as sight loss. Or it may 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 do their usual job.

## 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 things that you were used to being able to see and do, 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 might involve finding practical ways of coping with your new circumstances, such as taking up different hobbies. But your emotions and feelings cannot always be dealt with just by making practical changes. You may decide that you need professional support to get through that 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 were happening too quickly for you to take in what it all means.

It is common for people in such a position 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 worsening of a sight condition, especially when it has a significantly negative impact on your life circumstances. You might feel angry towards the people around you, such as your partner, relatives or friends. You might 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 might even be angry with yourself and wonder if there is something that you could have done to prevent your sight condition.

After 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 and how you will cope, and worry about the activities you won't be able to do that you have always done 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 have feelings of sadness and grief. These can seem overwhelming but, as with grief that occurs in other circumstances, it is likely that with time they will get less intense and affect you less frequently. Sight loss is a major life event and so you are likely to need time to manage it and come to terms with it.

If these feelings of sadness and grief persist they can develop into depression. You may be experiencing depression if you have ongoing feelings of sadness or helplessness that last for a number of weeks or more. Symptoms may include experiencing the following persistently: feeling 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 to manage these feelings.

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 will be able to find ways to deal both with the emotional impact and practical implications of your sight loss – these two aspects are inter-related.

You are likely to have to adjust how you see yourself as you may no longer be able to do the things you were used to doing. Being able to develop practical techniques and strategies to help you to readjust to life with sight loss and to manage your daily life can help you to 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 your 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 are various types of help to choose from. Seeking and accepting support is a healthy and normal response to such a life-changing situation as sight loss, and isn't a sign of weakness or failure. Many people who experience difficulties in their life, including life-changing events, look for help to manage and work through the resulting emotions.



People who, for example, have experienced a bereavement or the breakdown of a long-term relationship, often seek support such as counselling. As with the loss of your sight, they are all partly about having to deal with loss.

However, there are many aspects in coping with feelings and everyone will respond differently. You do not have to seek professional help to manage your emotions, especially if you do not feel it is right for you, or that you don't require it. You might for example, find that the love and support of a partner, relatives and friends is all that you need to cope. Or 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 any practical approaches you need to make to manage these parts of your life.

Even if you do not wish, or do not 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 at a later time.

## Available support

There are different types of support available to help you to manage your feelings. 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 types of therapies that are available include cognitive behavioural therapies (CBT), psychotherapy, humanistic therapies, mindfulness-based therapies and group counselling. These therapies are generally well structured, with 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 who is in need of support talking in an unstructured way about anything they choose to. It may 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 your thoughts and feelings, 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 a number of 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 that you have. Counsellors have training in their field and have a professional qualification. 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. 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 feelings and 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 she or he can give you the most appropriate support. Your counsellor 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.

If you decide after your first meeting that you do not want to either continue with counselling, or continue seeing that counsellor, it is entirely acceptable. You may wish to speak to a number of 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 a number of routes through which you can access counselling services. You can discuss your feelings initially with your GP, who can refer you for free NHS counselling. This may be at your GP's surgery, or at another NHS clinic where counselling services are provided, 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 be able to suggest a local private therapist, who will charge a fee (often negotiable) and will offer unlimited sessions.

You might be able to 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 depression, they should discuss your treatment options, which may include a course of anti-depressant medication. But your GP should take into account your opinion about which types of help and treatment you feel are most appropriate for you in the 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 Sight Loss Counselling 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. 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 getting to an unfamiliar location. It may also be the most practical option if 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 job or home life. But not all counsellors or counselling services offer counselling 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 will usually be able to 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 has looked into providing security and confidentiality and that your computer is password protected and has security software. You should also make sure you have a private space where you can communicate with your counsellor without distractions.

### **Sight Loss Counselling Team**

Our Sight Loss Counselling 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 counselling 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 varies, but is 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 passed on to anyone else without your consent. The only exception would be if we had very serious concerns about your safety or that of others.

Call our Helpline or email [counselling@rnib.org.uk](mailto:counselling@rnib.org.uk) to be referred to our Sight Loss Counselling 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 going onto our website and filling in an online agreement form. Visit [rnib.org.uk/sight-loss-counselling](https://rnib.org.uk/sight-loss-counselling)

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 the online counselling 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 Sight Loss Counselling 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.

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 Telebefriending service.

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

To find out more about telephone support groups please contact the Sight Loss Counselling team. You can do this by calling our Helpline or by emailing **[counselling@rnib.org.uk](mailto:counselling@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 sight loss, 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 with Sight Loss course takes place one day a week over a number of 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 with Sight Loss course contact our Helpline.

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

## **RNIB Telebefriending service**

One option for peer support is our Telebefriending service, a chat over the telephone with a small group of other people with 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, once per week for 55 minutes. Groups run between 9.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. The groups are usually six 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. We also offer telephone book groups and special interest groups.

All sorts of people take part in the groups, and this is taken into account when matching people to a suitable group.

To join a group, please contact  
Talk and Support by emailing  
[talkandsupport@rnib.org.uk](mailto:talkandsupport@rnib.org.uk) or call  
either **0845 330 3723** or **020 7391 2218**.

## **The Listening Eye**

The Listening Eye is a telephone-based service that offers support to anyone with a sight condition throughout the UK. It was set up by a group of blind people with long experience of living with sight loss who talk to callers about their problems and offer advice.

The facilitators offer support and empathy to anyone who needs the chance to talk about any aspect of failing sight.

The service is available between 6-10pm, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, on Freephone **0800 783 1979**.

## **Support for children and young people**

If you are a child or young person with sight loss, or if you are 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 we may be able to help. You can contact our Sight Loss Counselling Team. If anything connected with your sight loss makes you worried, unhappy, stressed, or unsure 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 to talk a problem through.

Everything you tell the counsellors remains confidential, so no one else will be contacted, including your parents. The main exception to this would be where 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 **[counselling@rnib.org.uk](mailto:counselling@rnib.org.uk)**

If you are a school, college or university student, there might 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](http://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](mailto:information@look-uk.org)** or visit **[look-uk.org](http://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](http://guidedogs.org.uk)**

## Further information

### **RNIB Helpline**

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

### **Specialist interest groups**

There are a number of 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](http://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](http://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 quickly refer back 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 are able to 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 are magnifiers which use a camera to make items look bigger and change the contrast or colour.

Focusing distance is the distance away from the magnifier that an object has to 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 aids 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.

## **We value your feedback**

You can help us improve this publication by letting us know what you think about it. Please complete and return the form opposite to:

### **RNIB**

Customer Knowledge and Information Team  
105 Judd Street  
London  
WC1H 9NE

You can also email us at  
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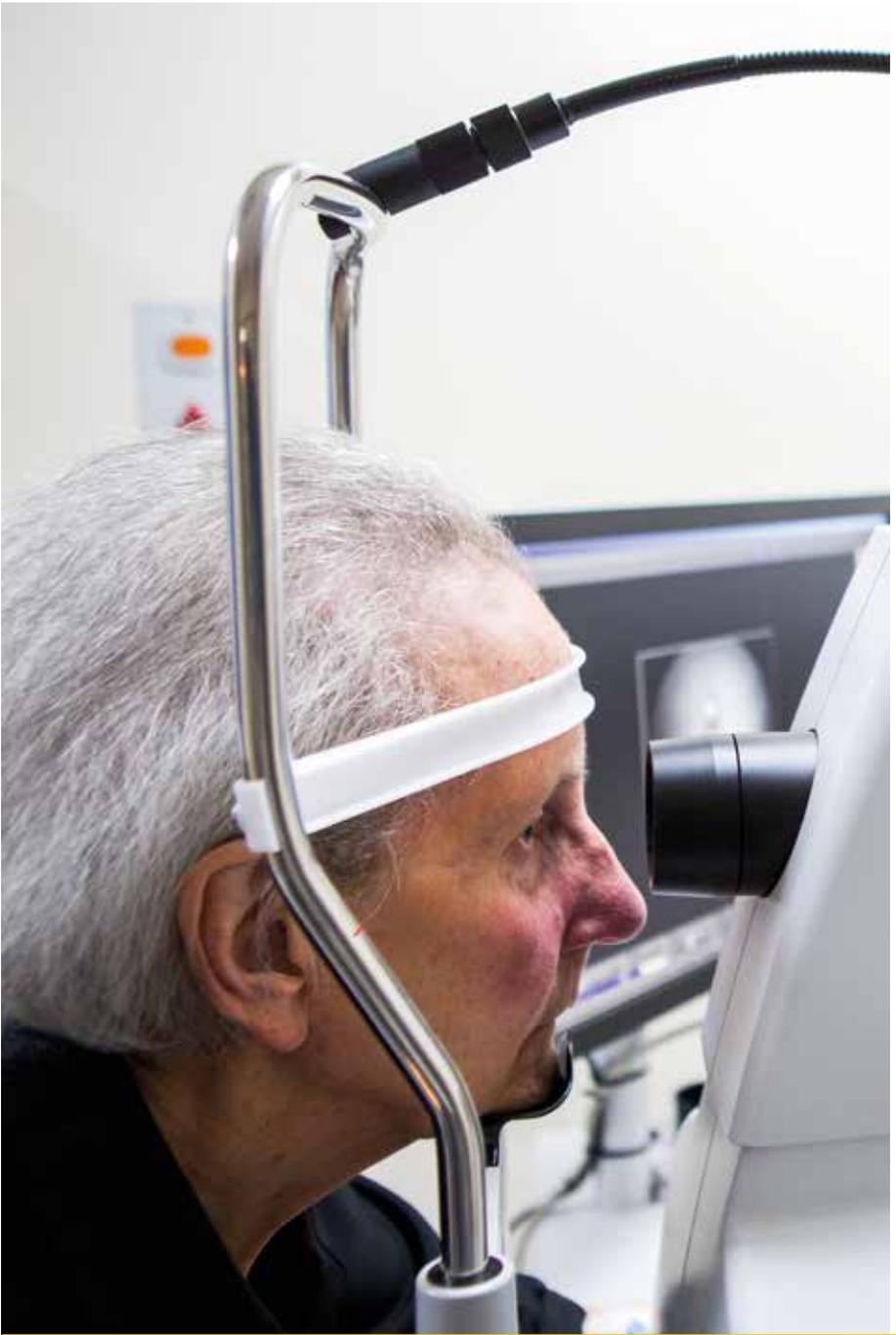
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## **About the Starting Out series**

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:

- Benefits, concessions and registration
- Education
- Employment
- Help from social services
- Housing
- Making the most of your sight
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## **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
- Managing Your Money
- 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**.

# RNIB

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If you or someone you know is living with sight loss, we're here to help.

**RNIB Helpline**

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Ask RNIB is the simple and easy way to find the answers to your questions online – try it today at [rnib.org.uk/ask](https://rnib.org.uk/ask)

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