

Sight loss: What we needed to know

This information has been put together by people who have experienced losing their sight

R N I B

See differently





Organisations involved in this booklet

Association of Directors of Adult Social Services

Blind Veterans UK

Guide Dogs

RNIB

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists

VISION UK

Visionary (representing local sight loss charities)

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This information has been put together by people living with sight loss who are at different stages of their sight loss journey.

We want to share some information and advice that would have helped us. Throughout we have included quotes about our experiences, and our top 10 tips for coping with sight loss. We hope that you will find it useful.

Austin, Billy, Bob, Charly, Garry, Isa, Jenny, Jim, Jonathan, Nick, Sarah, Stephen, Steve, Sue, Suzanne and Valerie



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Introduction

If you're reading this, then you or a close relative or a friend have experienced sight loss. You'll have been to a hospital, where an Eye Doctor (Ophthalmologist) has told you that you have lost vision or that you qualify for a Certificate of Vision Impairment (a document which states that you are sight impaired or severely sight impaired).

For some people, sight loss comes suddenly and for others, it's a part of long-term health issues. Either way it may be life changing.

It can be a difficult, worrying time and you may be feeling all sorts of emotions. For some people, it may be a particularly distressing time, too. It's perfectly common to feel upset, angry and overwhelmed. You may be struggling to understand why this has happened to you and how you're going to cope now and in the future.

We've been through what you're now experiencing and asked many of the same questions you may have asked. This is the information that we have found to be helpful, and we hope that this will give you some reassurance.

There is a lot of help and support out there to help you face the future with confidence, and things can and do get better.





The emotional impact of sight loss

Losing your sight

It's very common to experience a wide range of emotions. In this section we have put together some ideas that may help you.

It's common for people to experience feelings of shock, denial and despair when they lose their sight, but usually these are temporary and will lessen over time. It's natural to feel down, but if you're struggling, we would advise you to talk to your GP or another healthcare professional and to find out what help and support they can give you.

I lost sight in my right eye many years ago and have had over 10 operations on my left eye. I know that it's hard at first – it was for me. There is help out there, and you're not on your own.

Jenny

Your sight loss may vary from day to day, and this may affect how much help you need or want.



What sort of help is available?

How an ECLO can help you

Your Eye Clinic at the hospital may have an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO). They can provide you with information and advice on getting the help and support that you need. This includes assistance with understanding the certification and registration process, accessing emotional support and counselling, if necessary, and providing information on sight rehabilitation and other services in the community, such as referring to your local council and voluntary organisations. If there are no ECLOs at your Eye Clinic, RNIB's telephone-based Sight Loss Advisers are available on **0303 123 9999** and provide advice on anything about living with sight loss, including coping in the early stages, living independently, using technology, employment, legal rights, financial benefits and more.

Talking to other people and finding out what's in your local area

It may help to talk with friends, family or others around you who are willing to listen. It may also help to talk to people who have had similar experiences and understand what you're going through.

Your local sight loss charity can put you in touch with other people in your area, and offer support for partners, family members and friends. Visionary is the umbrella organisation for sight loss charities across the country, providing you with details of your local sight loss charity.

Visit **www.visionary.org.uk** for more information. Visit the Sightline Directory for more information on your local services **www.sightlinedirectory.org.uk**

You may also find it helpful to find out about the activities that are available for people with sight loss in your area. Local sight loss charities have lots of information, advice and practical solutions for people with sight loss.

Another good place to meet other people with similar experiences is RNIB Connect. You can share your experiences, hear what others are

going through, and learn and find solutions to some of the difficulties you're facing. You can also connect with people, find out about activities and services in your local area, and join telephone groups or chat online to discuss your sight condition, and the way technology can help you to stay independent. For more information, call RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or visit **www.rnib.org.uk/connect**

RNIB Connect Radio is made by and for people with sight loss. It broadcasts nationally with a variety of shows to suit all tastes. It has lots of information about living with sight loss. You can hear RNIB Connect Radio on Freeview Channel 730, online, or digitally via Radioplayer and Tunein apps.


People who have served in the Armed Forces, including National Service, are eligible for specialist support from Blind Veterans UK. This includes social activities and respite breaks. They also help people to learn new skills and hobbies. For more information, call **0800 389 7979** or visit **www.blindveterans.org.uk**

Knowing more about your eye condition

RNIB has very useful, medically-approved information on individual eye conditions. If you want to know more about your eye condition, then visit **rnib.org.uk/eyeconditions**

It's not always about the things that you can't see

Charles Bonnet Syndrome is something that can happen to people who lose some or all of their sight. People can see things that are not there (these are called visual hallucinations) and it can be very frightening as people may think they are experiencing mental health problems. For more information, visit **www.rnib.org.uk/eyeconditions** and the Charity Esme's Umbrella **www.charlesbonnetsyndrome.uk**

 Since losing vision, I kept seeing large cows fly down from the sky and I was frightened that I was losing my mind. I couldn't tell anyone about this, but by chance I found out about Charles Bonnet Syndrome. It was such a relief. If I had been told about this before, it would have helped me cope with things better.

Rea

Who you can talk to

There are many organisations that provide free telephone counselling for different eye conditions. For example, age-related macular degeneration is the largest cause of sight loss, and the Macular Society has a team of professional counsellors who have been trained to listen, to help people talk through their feelings, and to find ways of dealing with them. To contact the Macular Society, call **0300 3030 111** or visit **www.macularsociety.org**. RNIB offer several options via their Helpline on **0303 123 9999**, including peer support groups, advice, practical and emotional support.

You may find it useful to look up your condition on the internet to get the details of other organisations that are able to help you.

There are a number of other things that you may find helpful, such as joining a telephone befriending service, or relaxing through yoga, meditation, mood music and audiobooks. If you want more information, contact your local sight loss charity or RNIB's helpline on **0303 123 9999** or visit **www.sightlinedirectory.org.uk**. Some people have also found religion or their faith to be beneficial.

Getting out and about

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association provides a service called 'My Guide', which helps if you're feeling less confident about getting around. The service trains volunteers to use sighted-guiding techniques to help you to get to the places you want to go to, with confidence and on your own terms. You may want to learn or re-learn familiar routes to get to the shops, or to maintain your fitness. Training can also be provided for your friends and family to learn simple and safe guiding techniques to help you. For more information, call **0800 953 0113**, email **myguide@guidedogs.org.uk** or visit **www.guidedogs.org.uk**

The Sight Advice FAQ answers questions about living with sight loss, eye health or being newly diagnosed with a sight condition. This includes those who are supporting people through their sight loss journey, including parents, partners, carers and friends.

This site is brought to you by many organisations working together **www.sightadvicefaq.org.uk**.

Type your question into the search box or use the menu to find what you're looking for.

Low vision

The vast majority of people who are issued with a CVI (Certificate of Visual Impairment) will retain some sight. There is equipment and there are techniques to help you to make the most of the vision that you have.

We strongly recommend that you have a low vision assessment, as there are plenty of things that can be achieved with the right help.

Your low vision service

Your local low vision service can provide support and further information on sight loss. The low vision service will assess and train you to use magnifiers, lighting and low vision equipment. These are available on long term loan from councils/NHS services, including, in some areas, schemes based at local Optometrists or local sight loss charities. Low vision services across the country are delivered by different organisations. For example, they may be based in your local hospital or may be provided by a local sight loss charity. You can ask your Eye Doctor (Ophthalmologist) or the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer about your nearest low vision service.





Explaining the Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI)

Functions of the CVI



The CVI has three main functions:

It qualifies you to be registered with your local council as sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind).

It lets your local council know about your sight loss. They have a duty to contact you to offer registration and to see if you need help with day-to-day tasks.

The CVI records important information about the cause of your sight loss. It helps the NHS to identify any trends in certain eye conditions and helps with planning services.

What is registration?

Registration is not just your initial certification. It is carried out by your local council rather than the hospital. The term registration is often used as shorthand to cover the whole process but there are two distinct and separate stages. You are only registered after you have completed the second stage.

Stage 1 – Certification (at the eye clinic)

When an Eye Doctor (Ophthalmologist) considers your sight loss to have reached a certain threshold, there are two categories, namely “sight impaired” (also referred to on the form as partially sighted) and “severely sight impaired” (also referred to on the form as blind).

Very few people placed in the “severely sight impaired” category ever lose their sight completely and many retain some vision.

When the Eye Doctor (Ophthalmologist) signs the form, they are “certifying that you are eligible to be registered” with your council. You will also be asked to sign the form. The Eye Doctor (Ophthalmologist) may tell you that they are registering you; however, they are only completing the CVI, the first stage of the registration process.

Stage 2 – Registration (in the community)

When your council receives a copy of your CVI, someone should contact you and invite you to register as “sight impaired” or “severely sight impaired”.

Your council may have already been in touch with you, or they may contact you at some point in the future. One of the things they will do is to talk about the purpose and benefits of registration. It is up to you to decide if you want to be registered.

If you want more time to think about it, then you can also ask to be registered at a later time.

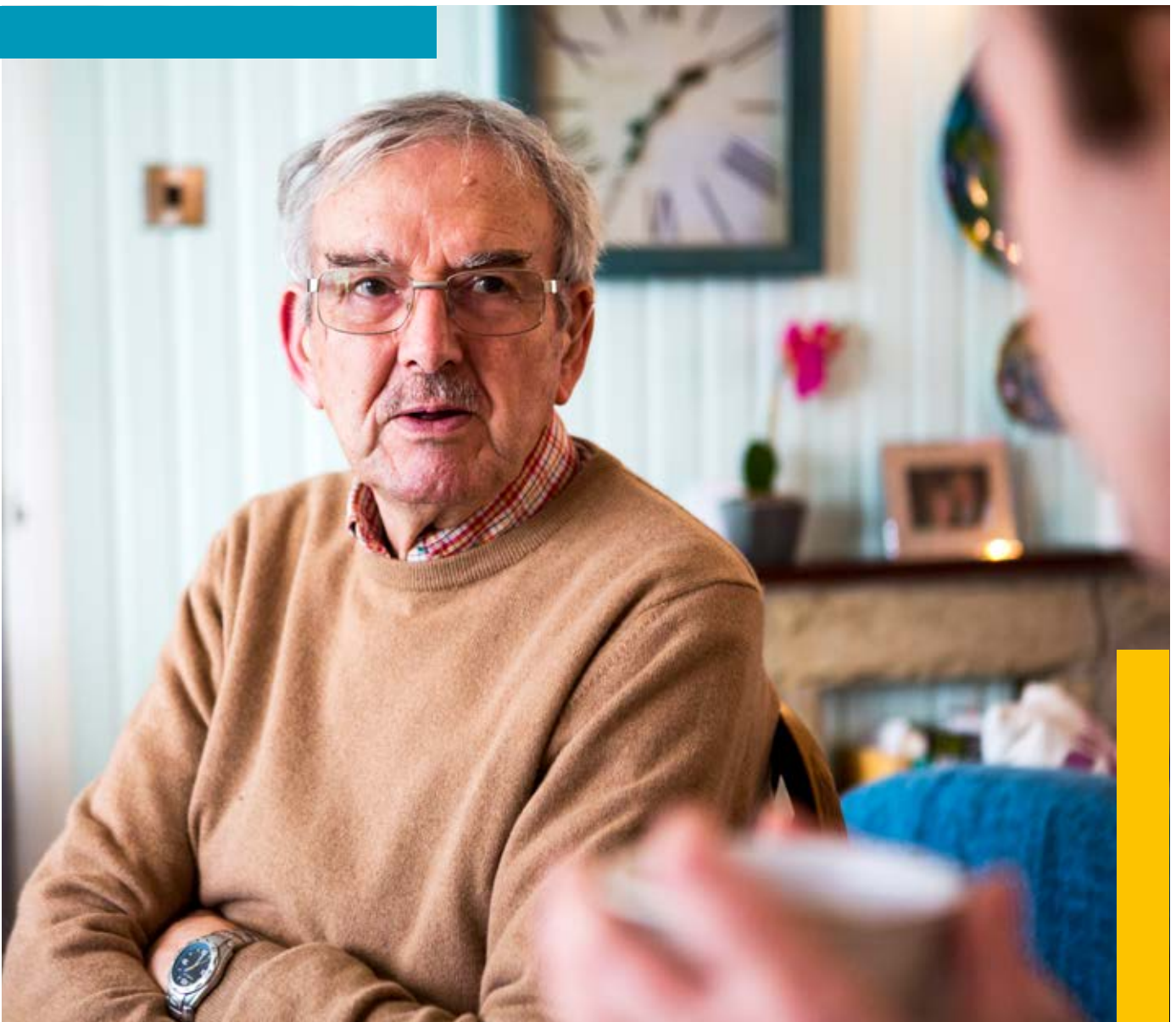
It doesn't cost anything and there are benefits to being registered (these are described later). The vast majority of people choose to be registered.

The date of registration

Your certification date is the date on which the CVI is signed by your Eye Doctor (Ophthalmologist) and the same date is taken as the date of registration by your council.

If you decide not to be registered but change your mind at a later date you should have your registration status backdated to the date the CVI was signed. The date of registration is important as it may affect your entitlement to certain welfare benefits.

Understanding what support you can expect from your council can be very confusing. Below are some of the key things that you should expect. However, if you're still unsure, then please contact your local sight loss charity or call RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999**.





Help that you can expect from your local council

Registering your sight loss

Every council must hold a register of people living in their area who are sight impaired and severely sight impaired.

Your council will receive a copy of your CVI, and should make contact with you within two weeks, to talk to you about registration and the benefits of being registered.

Your council may also have an agreement with another organisation to contact you on their behalf about registration. So don't worry if it's someone else that contacts you on your council's behalf.

At this point your assessment should start. Under the Care Act 2014, your council has a duty to assess what support you may need. You are entitled to an assessment whether or not you choose to be registered.

Finding out your care and support needs

There are different types of support you can receive from your council. They include vision rehabilitation, which helps to ensure that you have the right information, aids, training and skills to adapt to living with sight loss.

You may also be eligible to receive longer term help with daily living, including support in the home and accessing the community.

Your assessment will most likely start with being on the telephone with someone in a specialist sensory loss team, or in a telephone contact centre. They have the right skills and knowledge to help you, and you will be asked about your needs and what it is you want to achieve.

They may also provide you with information and advice, although many councils are placing information and advice online including self-assessment facilities.

The next step may include someone coming to your home.

Where a Local Authority identify disability equipment as promoting independence, this should be provided free of charge up to a value of £1000, regardless of individual financial circumstances. The duty is on the council to arrange an assessment in a timely manner if there is appearance of need.

How vision rehabilitation support can help you


Vision rehabilitation is support that your council must provide to help you to be as independent as possible. Your council should not charge you for this and should make it available for as long as you need it. You also don't have to be registered to receive vision rehabilitation support.

Types of support you may receive include:

- Understanding your eye condition, learning what it means for you and your family, and explaining the certification and registration process.
- Coming to terms with your condition and understanding the changes and adjustments you may need to live your life.
- Looking after yourself and learning new ways of completing tasks.
- Moving around your home safely and looking after it. This includes assessing your mobility needs, for example, measures to reduce the risks of falls, the use of stairs, and advice on appropriate equipment and mobility aids. If needed, a time can be arranged for you to receive one to one training.
- Assessing your needs for daily living skills training, for example, any support or training you need to prepare meals, make drinks, use the oven and hob, iron or shop.
- If needed, referring you to a low vision service, where someone will assess your needs and recommend the use of aids such as magnifiers, and specialist lighting.
- Reviewing the lighting in your home to see if any improvements can be made.

- Signposting you for advice and support about your housing needs.
- Getting out and about, travelling confidently and safely, and using public transport.
- You may be referred for a benefits check, for example, with regard to claiming Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance, and concessions such as blue badge and travel passes.
- Looking at your communication needs and how you keep in touch with others, such as reading, writing, telling the time, and using smartphones, tablets and speech software.
- Ensuring you have access to training, education and learning opportunities.
- Signposting you to a Disability Employment Advisor or ways to volunteer.
- Providing information on social activities that match your interests, for example, community groups and local sight loss charities.
- Providing information on talking books and newspapers.
- Looking at your emotional needs, for example, counselling, telephone support, peer support, courses or groups.
- Putting you in contact with other parts of your council, the local low vision service and other organisations in the local community where you can get help.

You should also be given the contact details of the vision rehabilitation service, in case you need to reach them in the future to answer any questions, or if your needs have changed. If you feel that you aren't ready to engage with the vision rehabilitation service yet, then you can always get in touch at a later time.




Initially, my confidence took a massive dent, but something that really helped me was participating in a 'Living with Sight Loss' course run by my local sight loss charity. I found it incredibly beneficial. I met other people who were in a similar situation to me and together, we shared hints, tips and stories. It made me realise that I was not on my own and it really helped me to re-build my confidence. My group still meets up regularly and we continue to support each other.

Steve

Equipment that might help you

Your vision rehabilitation assessment should also help to identify the equipment or aids that you need to help you to maintain, or increase, your independence. They include:

- Aids, such as a liquid level indicator (to help you make a hot drink safely), talking clock or talking scales.
- Changes to lighting.
- Mobility aids, such as a white stick or a symbol cane.



I became sight impaired following a stroke and I really lacked confidence about going out on my own. As an ex-service person I went to one of the Blind Veterans UK centres which really helped me. The Rehabilitation Worker from my council has also been very helpful. They changed the white stick I was using and taught me how to use it walking on the pavements and getting on and off buses, and are helping me to use it at railway stations. This has all helped me to build up my confidence again, make me less dependent upon others and enable me to get out and about by myself.

Garry

Your council should provide the equipment (aids and minor adaptations) that has been identified in your assessment, and you should be supported with how to use the equipment provided. Some charities also provide equipment and, in many areas, work closely with councils.

You will also receive advice on where you can buy other items of equipment to make your life easier. You won't be charged VAT on equipment that you purchase.

On-going care and support that you may need

You may also be eligible for longer term support. Your council must carry out a care and support assessment to find out what is important to you. The government has set minimum criteria that people must meet in order to qualify for ongoing care and support.

Someone may come to your home to carry out the assessment, you may be asked to complete a form through a council website or someone might speak to you on the telephone. You can request that someone visits you at home.

Your council will be looking for three things when carrying out an assessment. Firstly, that you have a disability; secondly that you need support to meet two or more out of a list of outcomes; and thirdly, that there is a significant impact on your wellbeing.

The assessed outcomes cover a range of areas, including your ability to move around your home safely, such as using kitchen facilities. Other outcomes include maintaining a habitable and safe home, preparing food, developing and maintaining family or other relationships, and accessing and engaging in work, training, education or volunteering.

If you have already received vision rehabilitation support, but think that your needs are not being met and require some more help, then you can also ask your council for a care and support needs assessment.

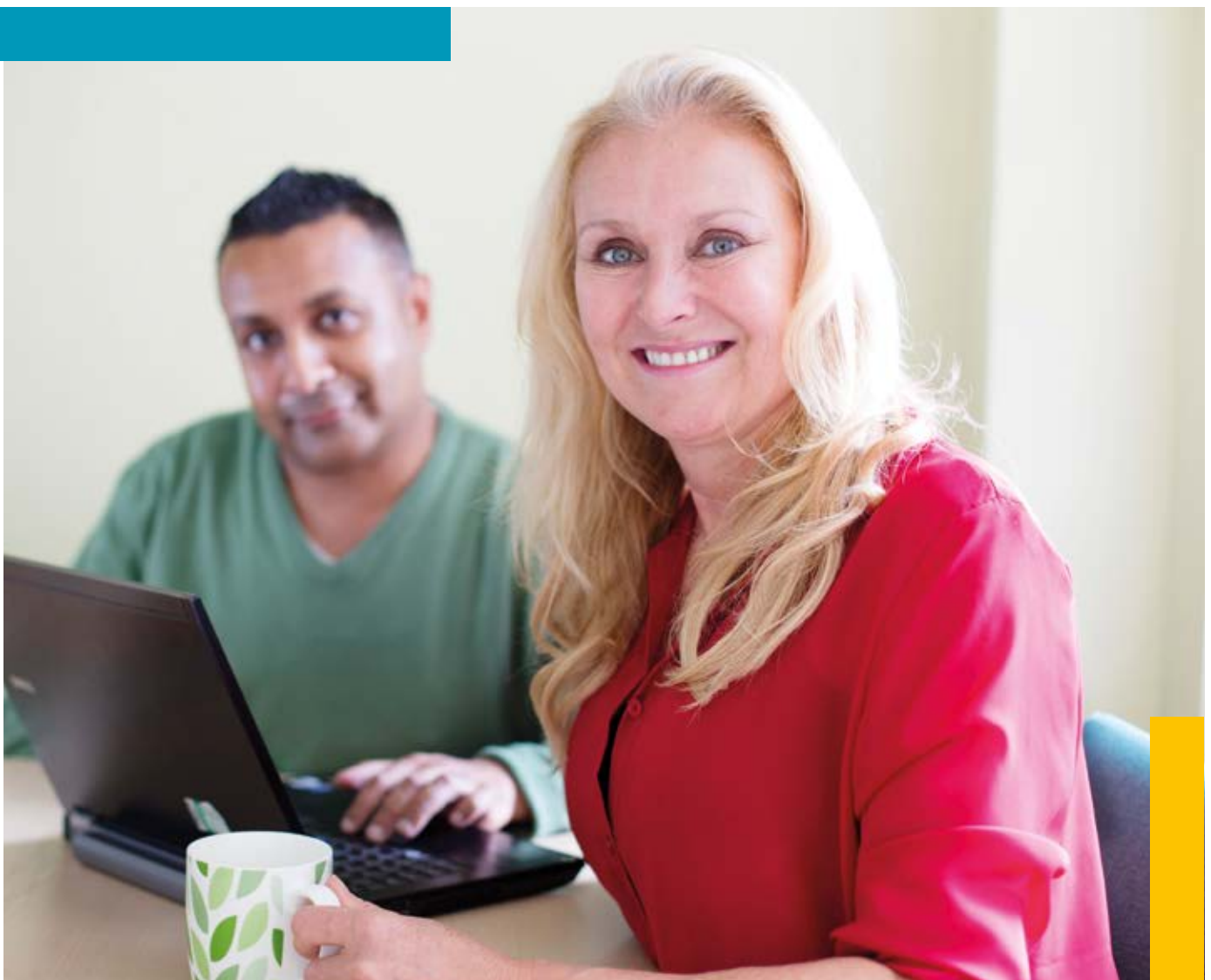
If you are eligible for support your council will talk to you about how your eligible needs could be met, this may include talking to you about what informal support networks you have that could meet some of your needs. Dependent on the outcome of this discussion your council may provide you with care and support, or the funding to arrange it yourself (this is called a Direct Payment). Depending on your income you may have to pay a contribution towards this. Your contribution will be determined following a financial assessment undertaken by your council.

If your council hasn't contacted you, and you feel you might be 'at risk' without this help, we strongly recommend you contact your council as soon as possible. Your council must carry out an assessment if you ask for one. The council may still be able to support you without you meeting the eligibility criteria if they feel they can reduce, delay or eliminate some of your needs, by providing a time limited service or low vision aids.

If you need more information, contact your local sight loss charity.

Help for those supporting you

Under the Care Act 2014, carers are entitled to an assessment of their own needs to help them to continue to care. To ask for an assessment, contact your council. Carers UK support people who care for family or friends, and provides information and advice to carers, such as advice about benefits, work and practical help. For more information, call **0808 808 7777** or visit **www.carersuk.org**





What it means for work, education and training

Support for you to continue working

If you're currently in employment, your sight loss does not mean you have to stop working.

Sight loss is considered a disability under equality legislation. Employers are not allowed to discriminate against someone based on their disability. For someone experiencing sight loss, this means that it is unlawful to dismiss them on the grounds of disability, and instead, requires employers to make changes in the workplace to meet a person's specific needs. These are called 'reasonable adjustments'. You may benefit from the government's 'Access to Work' scheme that provides practical and financial support for disabled people in work or starting a new job.

You should not assume that you need to resign from your job, as equipment and support is available that can enable you to remain in your current job. If you cannot perform this job anymore, there may still be other more suitable roles within your organisation. It's important to talk to your employer to discuss the best options. They may also need some help in understanding how they can support you best.

How "Access to Work" can help you

It provides grants towards any extra employment costs that result from a disability, including special aids and equipment, Support Workers and travel to work. For more information, contact the Access to Work Team on **0345 268 8489**.

If you're experiencing difficulties with your work, there are organisations that may be able to help you, such as a trade union (if you have one), RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or your local Citizens Advice.

Education and training

Attending a further education college can provide you with the skills to start or change your career. The Disability Employment Advisor at your local job centre will be able to give you advice and guidance on opportunities for re-training.



The benefits you may be entitled to

Getting registered can give you some very significant advantages, from making life more affordable by enabling you to claim a wide range of concessions, to making it easier for you to claim welfare benefits.

Financial and welfare benefits

Although being registered does not automatically entitle you to any particular welfare benefit, it confirms your sight loss and helps as evidence in your claim.

If you have sight loss, and/or a long-term health condition or disability that affects your ability to live independently, you could apply for:

- Personal Independence Payments (if you are aged 16 or over and under state pension age).
- Attendance Allowance (if you are 65 and over, and have care needs).
- Universal Credit (if you are of working age, on a low income and either working, looking for work or unable to work);
- Guarantee Pension Credit (if you are state pension age or over and have a low or modest income).

If you're registered as severely sight impaired, you are eligible for the Blind Person's Tax Allowance. This means that you can earn more money before you start to pay income tax. For further information, contact your local tax office or visit www.gov.uk/blind-persons-allowance/overview

There are also benefits available for carers, such as carers allowance.

Welfare benefits are regularly reviewed and sometimes changed. We advise you to ask for more information to check if you, or your carer, are eligible. There are organisations that can help you to do this. Contact RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or your local Citizens Advice or your Local Sight Loss Charity.

Concessions and assistance

There's a range of very important concessions that are available for people with sight loss. Which concessions you are entitled to depends on whether you are registered as severely sight impaired or sight impaired.

Travel help

Free bus travel

If you're registered as severely sight impaired, sight impaired, or have a CVI, then you are entitled to a concessionary disabled person's bus pass. This enables you to travel anywhere in England, but there are time restrictions on when you can travel. To apply, contact your council.

Some areas operate different types of concessionary travel schemes. For example, people living in London can apply for a Disabled Persons Freedom Pass. This will give you free travel on public transport such as buses, the tube, and trams. You can use your pass on most journeys across London, but there may be certain times limitations on when you can use your pass.

The London Taxicard Scheme provides subsidised taxis for disabled people who find it difficult to use public transport. Ask your council about the available travel concessions in your area.

Blue Badges

A Blue Badge may enable the person driving you to park in a disabled bay, on the street, or in car parks. If you're registered as severely sight impaired, then you qualify automatically. If you're sight impaired, you will need to be assessed. In many places, there will be no charge to park. To apply contact your council.

Disabled Person's Railcard

If you're registered as severely sight impaired or sight impaired you're entitled to a Disabled Person's Railcard that enables you, and another person travelling with you, to get 1/3 off ticket prices. You do have to pay for a disabled person's railcard. To apply telephone **0345 605 0525** or go to **www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk**

Travel Assistance

Rail companies provide help with planning your journey. They can go through ticket options and arrange the assistance you need when you travel. This includes having staff to meet you upon arrival. There are several ways that you can book travel assistance. Call National Rail Enquiries on **0345 748 4950**, or go to **www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk**. You can also speak to the staff in person at any staffed train station.

Airline companies also provide travel assistance. Contact the airline directly for more information.

Television licence

If you're registered as severely sight impaired, you can get 50 per cent off your TV Licence. For more information and to apply, visit **www.tvlicensing.co.uk/reducedfee**

Assistance with directory enquiries

If you're registered as severely sight impaired or sight impaired, you can make use of the free directory enquiries service. You can use this service whether or not you are with BT. To sign up for this service call **0800 587 0195**. Once signed up, all you have to do is to dial **195** and you can talk to a trained operator who will help you with your enquiry. If you ask to be connected to the number you need, you will then be charged for the call.

Assistance from utility companies

Some utilities suppliers (gas, electricity and water) offer certain discounts and support for people with sight loss. Contact your supplier to find out what you may be eligible for.

Being sight impaired or severely sight impaired qualifies you to sign up to your utility supplier's Priority Services Register. This can get you extra help and support with your gas, electricity and water. For more information, contact your utility suppliers.

Leisure concessions

There are a number of leisure concessions such as sport, theatre or theme parks, that you and your partner, relative or carer, may be entitled to if you have sight loss. We advise you to always ask about the available discounts.

You may be entitled to concessions at the cinema if you're registered as severely sight impaired or claim certain benefits, including Personal Independence Payments and Attendance Allowance. For more information, ask at your local cinema.

Audio description

Some films at the cinema have audio description, where someone explains what is happening on the screen. The majority of cinemas now have this available for selected films, but check with your local cinema.

Some television channels offer this service on certain programmes. Some theatre productions, museums and exhibitions now also have audio-described tours.

Vocaleyes is a nationwide audio-description service, providing access to the arts for people with sight loss. For more information, visit www.vocaleyes.co.uk

Reading and accessing information

Reading is important to all of us. There are different ways of reading and the best way to find out what works for you is to try them out. All banks, utility companies and other providers can send your information in different formats, such as large print, audio and electronic or online.

Daily newspapers and magazines are available in audio format by subscribing to RNIB Newsagent, or online directly from the publisher. The Talking News Federation can put you in touch with your local talking newspaper group. For more information, visit www.tnf.org.uk

There are a variety of audio books available. For more information, call the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or visit www.rnib.org.uk

- Audio Library on **01296 432 339** or visit www.calibre.org.uk
- Listening Books on **020 7407 9417** or visit www.listening-books.org.uk

Your local library can also help you with books in your preferred reading format.

You can now receive and read a lot of material using electronic devices. These include video magnifiers, text to speech scanners, and everyday technology such as smartphones, e-book readers, MP3 players and computers. Most smartphones and tablets have in-built accessibility features such as magnification and screen reading facilities. Computers can also be made accessible with magnification and screen reading software.

Different types of equipment can be demonstrated and purchased at your nearest local sight loss charity resource centre.

Sight tests

It's really important that you continue to have your eyes checked after you've been through the certification process. You can still be vulnerable to further sight deterioration, so it's important to look after your eyes. Eye tests can check for other eye conditions and general health issues too. You should have your eyes checked at least every 2 years, and your optometrist may recommend more regular checks.

Sight tests at home

If you're registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired, you're entitled to a regular NHS sight test free of charge. You may be entitled to a mobile service where you can have your eyes tested at home.

Contact your usual optometrist to find out if they're able to visit you at home. It can be useful to see the same optometrist, as they already have a record of your eye problems and will be familiar with your needs and requirements.

If you don't have an optometrist or if your usual optometrist cannot help, then you can check with your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Go to this website to find your local CCG, www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Clinical%20Commissioning%20Group/LocationSearch/1. Your CCG will keep a list of optometrists in your area who provide home visits and should be able to provide their details.



Our top 10 tips

Listed below are the things that we've found to be helpful. We hope that they'll be useful to you, too.

- 1 Never be afraid to ask people for help.
- 2 There is no question that is too small to ask.
- 3 Don't assume the first solution will be right for you. We're all different. If it's not working out, ask again, ask someone else and try something different.
- 4 Talk to people who are facing, or who have faced, similar experiences.
- 5 Find your local sight loss group. There is a lot that you can get out of it and a lot that you can give to it, too.
- 6 Try to stay healthy and exercise regularly. Find out about how your local leisure centre can support you.
- 7 Having a visit from a Rehabilitation Officer/Worker can really help.
- 8 Don't give up on your smartphone or your computer, as most have accessibility features already built in. There are lots of packages available that enable everyone to use a computer.
- 9 Try equipment before you buy it. Some local sight loss charities run Resource Centres, where equipment is displayed.
- 10 If you belonged to any organisations, societies or clubs before your sight loss, don't give them up, and stay involved in the things that you enjoy.

There are also lots of practical things that we have found to be helpful, for example, putting your clock at head height and changing your lighting for brighter lights.



Your rights under the Equality Act

By being certified as sight impaired or severely sight impaired, you're automatically protected from unfair treatment under the Equality Act 2010.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly because of your sight loss, or find it difficult to access services because reasonable changes have not been made, you can challenge this.

For example, if you have difficulty with reading documents, you can ask for them to be sent to you in large print. If this does not happen, it is a form of discrimination that you can challenge.

If this doesn't resolve things, you can get advice from your local sight loss charity, RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or your local Citizens Advice.





Where you can go to get more help and support

The following organisations provide useful information and may also offer vision rehabilitation, training, equipment, support and counselling, depending on your personal circumstances.

National sight loss organisations

Blind Veterans UK

Blind Veterans UK provides free services and support to vision-impaired Armed Forces and National Service veterans, no matter when they served or how they lost their sight. For more information, call **0800 389 7979** or visit **www.blindveterans.org.uk**

British Blind Sport

British Blind Sport enables blind and partially sighted people to have the same opportunities as sighted people to access and enjoy sport and recreational activities in the UK. For more information, call **01926 42 42 47** visit **www.britishblindsport.org.uk**

Deafblind UK

Deafblind UK provides specialist services to deafblind people and those who have progressive sight and hearing loss acquired throughout their lives. For more information, call **0800 132 320** or visit **www.deafblind.org.uk**

Esme's Umbrella (Charles Bonnet Syndrome)

Esme's Umbrella is a charity working towards a greater awareness of Charles Bonnet Syndrome. For more information, call **0345 051 3925** or visit **www.charlesbonnetsyndrome.uk**

Guide Dogs

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association not only provides guide dogs but also offers a range of other mobility services, giving advice and supporting those with sight loss and their families, especially in maintaining or improving a person's ability to get out and about. For more information, call **0800 953 0113** or visit the website **www.guidedogs.org.uk**

The Macular Society

The Macular Society provide information and support to people affected by macular conditions, their family and friends. For more information, help and advice, call **0300 3030 111** or visit **www.macularsociety.org**

National Federation for the Blind

The National Federation for the Blind is an independent, campaigning pressure group.

They campaign to improve the welfare and quality of daily life for all blind, partially sighted and deafblind people. For more information, call **0192 429 1313** or visit **www.nfbuk.org**

RNIB

RNIB offers practical and emotional support for people living with sight loss. For more information, call the Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or visit **www.rnib.org.uk**

SeeAbility

SeeAbility supports people with sight loss and multiple disabilities. They provide specialist support and accommodation services as well as raising awareness to help prevent avoidable sight loss for people with learning disabilities. For more information, call **01372 755 000** or visit **www.seeability.org**

Sense

Sense supports adults and children who are deafblind or have sensory impairments with additional needs. For more information, call **033 330 9256** or visit **www.sense.org**

Visionary

Visionary is a membership organisation for local sight loss charities for blind and partially sighted people. For more information, visit **www.visionary.org.uk**

General charities

Age UK

Age UK helps older people by providing information, advice and support. For more information, call **0800 169 6565** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk**

Carers UK

Carers UK supports people who look after older, ill or disabled family and friends. For more information, call **0808 808 7777** or visit **www.carersuk.org**

Diabetes UK

Diabetes UK supports people affected by, or at risk of diabetes. For more information, call **0345 123 2399** or visit **www.diabetes.org.uk**

MIND

MIND provides information and support to people living with a mental health problem. For more information, call **0300 123 3393** or visit **www.mind.org.uk**

Relate

Relate counsellors can help people to come to terms with what's happening now and in the future. Counselling with Relate is open to all. For more information, call **0300 100 1234** or visit **www.relate.org.uk**

Samaritans

Samaritans is available round the clock, every day of the year. Talk to them off the record about whatever is getting to you. Call **116 123**, email **jo@samaritans.org** or to find your nearest branch visit **www.samaritans.org**

Other sources of information and support

Citizens Advice **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

Your local GP

Your local council

Local sight loss charities



We have written this booklet and hope that you have found it useful.

**This booklet is available
to download from
www.rnib.org.uk/sightlossinfo**