

Starting out

# Employment



**RNIB**

Supporting people  
with sight loss

# About the Starting out series

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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**
- **Emotional support**
- **Help from social services**
- **Housing**
- **Making the most of your sight**

All these booklets are available in audio, print and braille formats. To order please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (all calls charged at local rate) or email [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk) If you, or someone you know, is living with sight loss, we're here to help.

For a full list of the information sources used in any of these titles please contact [publishing@rnib.org.uk](mailto:publishing@rnib.org.uk)

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# Introduction

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As a blind or partially sighted person you may be worried that you will be unable to find work or stay in your current job, however there is help and support available from RNIB, other voluntary organisations and the government.

This guide has details of where you can find information and support to help you find work, stay in work or become self-employed.

## **Aidan's story**

“I'm registered as blind, and this was the result of an accident I had at work where I tripped and fell and banged my head, and I think optic nerve damage resulted.

The transition going back into work was hard. However, I had undertaken a course with RNIB while I was off work, and I was given access to a whole range of equipment that allowed me to experiment with what was and was not possible, so I had quite a lot of confidence before going back.”

# Looking for work

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Whether you want to find a job for the first time or get back into employment, RNIB and Action for Blind People's Employment Advisers can help.

Our advisers will be able to give you information about:

- the benefits and concessions you could be entitled to whilst looking for work
- job search skills
- writing an effective CV and application form
- how and when to disclose your sight loss when applying for a job
- making the best impression at interviews
- overcoming barriers to employment, such as negative attitudes from potential employers
- your rights when applying for a job and attending interviews
- specialist vocational courses
- pre-employment training, including the Adult Employment Programme at RNIB College Loughborough

- getting work experience and how to apply for RNIB's Trainee Grade Scheme
- other organisations that can help.

If you are receiving benefits whilst you are unemployed, you can also contact your local Jobcentre and ask to speak to a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA). Your DEA can talk you through the government training, support and grant schemes that are available to help you get into work.

### **Pauline's story**

“I've got juvenile macular degeneration, cataracts and a vitreous detachment of the retina that involves lots of distortion, sparkles and refraction, making reading difficult. The Disability Employment Adviser at the job centre encouraged me to enrol on RNIB's Trainee Grade Scheme and the 12-month course helped me gain confidence and update my skills, especially how to fill in job application forms correctly. I applied for a number of posts, got an interview at the Advertising Standards Authority, got the job, and since then I've had a promotion.”

# Staying in your job

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If the right support is in place there is every chance that you could stay in work, even if it means doing things differently or taking on a different type of role.

Support is there to help you keep working and make the most of your experience, skills and knowledge.

RNIB and Action for Blind People's Employment Advisers can give you information about:

- how to tell your employer about your sight loss and how you can work with them to adapt how you work
- your rights at work, including what reasonable adjustments your employer should put in place to help you continue to work and how to deal with any discrimination
- the Government's Access to Work scheme and how it can help to pay for equipment, adaptations, support workers and travel costs (if you're unable to use public transport)

- technology and products that can help, for example computer software that can make it easier to see what is on your screen or read aloud the information.

## **Lynsey's story**

I'm a contract administrator with a government agency and have sight problems due to keratoconus. But I can continue to work full-time with the help of two large-screen computer monitors and ZoomText software. RNIB also recommended the use of other software called Supernova. My employer was very supportive and put this in place, arranging training to allow me to use it to its full potential and carry out my daily functions more easily. "My eye condition makes me very sensitive to light. But my colleagues have been very accommodating and the problem has eased by placing a tinted film over the windows."



# Being self-employed

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Another option to consider is self-employment.

RNIB and Action for Blind People's Employment Advisers can give you information about:

- writing a business plan
- the Government's Access to Work scheme (see [page 7](#))
- sources of funding for your business
- benefits you can claim whilst setting up a new business
- other organisations and networks that can help.



# Further information

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## RNIB

All of our employment information is available online by visiting [rnib.org.uk/employment](https://www.rnib.org.uk/employment)

We also have a range of factsheets that are available in large print, braille, audio CD and via email. These include:

- Access to Work
- Looking for work
- Job seeking resources
- Self-employment
- Staying in work
- Trainee Grade Scheme
- Your rights in employment under the Equality Act 2010.

You can request a copy of any of these factsheets by calling our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or emailing [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

You can also call the Helpline for employment advice and information.

## **Action for Blind People – England only**

Action for Blind People have a range of information online, which you can find by visiting [actionforblindpeople.org.uk/employment](https://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/employment)

You can also get employment advice and information from an Employment Adviser by calling the Action Employment Line on **0800 440 2255** or emailing [employmentline@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:employmentline@actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

## **Blind in Business**

Provides employment services, including advice, training and support in finding work, for students and graduates with sight loss. They can also provide guidance to employers looking to recruit blind and partially sighted candidates.

Call **020 7588 1995**, visit [blindinbusiness.co.uk](https://www.blindinbusiness.co.uk) or email [info@blindinbusiness.org.uk](mailto:info@blindinbusiness.org.uk)

## Government advice

The [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website has lots of useful information about employment.

The website also has contact details for the centres that administer the Access to Work scheme. Visit

[gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled](https://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled)

## Sightline directory

The online directory to help you find the people, organisations and services you need. Visit

[sightlinedirectory.org.uk](https://sightlinedirectory.org.uk)

## Local societies

Local independent societies for blind and partially sighted people can provide various forms of advice and support. You can find the contact details for your local society from the Sightline directory or by calling our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**.



## We value your feedback

Please help us improve the information we supply by sharing your comments on this publication. Complete the form and return to:

**FREEPOST RSCB-GJHJ-HLXG**

**RNIB Publishing, 105 Judd Street**

**London WC1H 9NE**

(There is no need to use a stamp.)

Alternatively, you can email

[publishing@rnib.org.uk](mailto:publishing@rnib.org.uk)

Please include your contact details if you request further information.

**1. Where did you receive your copy of this leaflet?**

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**2. Did you find that the information was presented in a way that was easy to read and easy to understand? Please give details of anything you feel could be improved.**

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**3. Is there any information you would have found helpful, or were expecting to find, that was missing?**

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**4. Further comments. Please use the space below for any other comments you have on the information in this leaflet or any aspect of your contact with RNIB.**

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# About the Confident living series

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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
- Living safely
- Managing your money
- Reading
- Shopping
- Technology
- Travel

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

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