



Employment assessment toolkit

For professionals who support blind and partially sighted people looking for work

Working together

RNIB

Supporting people
with sight loss

Action for blind people 

Introduction

This employment assessment toolkit is the result of work carried out by a team from RNIB, Action for Blind People, and the University of Birmingham. It has been developed as part of a research and development project called ENABLER, which was funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

What does the toolkit involve?

The toolkit enables employment advisors who work with blind and partially sighted people to gain a clear understanding of what your client's aspirations are in relation to employment, and what types of support and development are needed to help fulfil these aspirations. It provides a way of having a structured conversation with your clients. As the name suggests, the toolkit involves two related approaches.

- Firstly, the questions contained within the toolkit are designed to generate assessment information, which helps the employment advisor and client to design an appropriate action plan. The toolkit covers areas which are often identified by blind and partially sighted people as being barriers to gaining

paid or voluntary work, such as mobility and accessing computers. It also includes some questions which provide important context information such as your clients' level of vision and general health.

- Secondly, some of the questions in the toolkit have been identified as having a useful screening function. What this means is that answers to some of the questions can be combined to enable your client to be assigned to one of five levels. The assigned level can be helpful to communicate to your clients the steps they need to take which will lead to paid or voluntary work, and it can also help communicate progress which your clients have made over time.



How was the toolkit developed?

The development of the toolkit involved extensive discussions and trials with blind and partially sighted people and employment advisors. It was revised and improved upon over the course of the project as feedback was gathered. While the toolkit asks some challenging questions, we are confident that it sensitively and efficiently gathers information which will help your clients reflect upon where they are and where they want to be.

How do I use the toolkit?

The questions in the toolkit should be self explanatory. They are arranged under different sub-sections: employment activity, current job search activity, access to information, computer skills, independent travel, vision, health related issues, and target job. Some questions require you to use the same wording as is written in the toolkit. This helps to ensure reliability. Nevertheless, while the questions cover many important topics they can only give a partial picture. Employment advisors should also use their own judgement; ask additional questions if you need to learn more about your client in order to assess his or her level.

The toolkit can be used in two broad ways:

1. The toolkit is designed to encourage discussion between client and employment advisor with the aim of informing the development of an action plan. This plan should outline a set of actions which seek to support your client's progress towards employment. At the end of each sub-section of the toolkit the employment advisor is encouraged to consider carefully what action might usefully lead to your client making progress. This is very important; if the assessment does not lead to clear action plans then the toolkit becomes ineffective.
2. The final section of the toolkit provides a procedure to calculate your client's distance from work, generating one of five possible levels. The level can be communicated to your client about how close they are to employment. This is a crude measure, but trials have shown us that it can be helpful in several ways.

Firstly, blind and partially sighted people find it useful as it helps them get a clear sense of the scale of the challenges ahead of them. For some this can be daunting, but when coupled with the assessment tool and associated action plan the challenge can be broken down into achievable steps.

Secondly, clients and employment advisors can find it useful to revisit this level after a period of work because it can show them the progress which has been made.

Finally, the assessment is very helpful from a management point of view. The type of support which is needed to support blind and partially sighted people at different levels varies considerably and being able to get a sense of the range and numbers of clients being supported helps with planning and justifying services.

An accessible Word version of this toolkit is available to download from:

rnib.org.uk/assessmenttoolkit

Assessment tool

Basic client information

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Mobile:

E-mail:

Date of birth:

Employment advisor:

Date completed:

Date of previous assessment (if any):

Employment activity

This section asks questions about your client's employment history. Questions 1 and 4 are screening questions, and need to be asked every time you complete an assessment. Questions 2, 3, 5 and 6 only need to be asked the first time the assessment is used.

<p>Q1: [screening] When was the last time your client was in paid employment?</p>	<p>6. 0-3 months ago 5. 4-6 months ago 4. 7-12 months ago 3. 13-24 months ago 2. 25 months or more (record how long) 1. Never worked</p>	<p>Answer (6-1):</p>
<p>Q2: Relevant details of reasons for not being in paid work.</p>	<p>Record brief details of reasons your client believes they have not been in paid work, for example, unable to work for health reasons, student, onset of sight loss, became unemployed and unable to find work.</p>	<p>Notes:</p>
<p>Q3: Relevant details of any paid work, work placements or voluntary work they have done in the past.</p>	<p>Record employer details, start and end dates and job title / responsibilities.</p>	<p>Notes:</p>
<p>Q4: [screening] (If relevant) Does any of this previous employment history include experience of paid employment, whilst being blind or partially sighted?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If yes, record dates and details.</p>	<p>Score 1 for YES Score 0 for NO Score:</p>
<p>Q5: Has your client used your employment support services before now?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If yes, record dates and details.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>
<p>Q6: Has your client used other employment support services before?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If yes, record dates and details.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>

Current job search activity

This section asks about current job search activities. The questions are related to activities since the previous assessment. If this is a first interview, then consider activities in the previous three months.

Q7: [screening] Has your client been doing any job search activity since the last assessment? (Or in the last three months if first interview)	Answer yes or no. Record details and explanations. If no, go to Q14.	Score 1 for YES Score 0 for NO Score:
Q8: How many hours per week on average has your client spent on carrying out job search activity (internet, newspapers etc) since the last assessment? (Or in the last three months if first interview)	Record number of hours or none.	Number of hours:
Q9: Does your client have a CV?	Answer yes or no. If yes, record date it was last updated.	Answer: yes no
Q10: Has your client applied for any jobs since the last assessment? (Or in the last three months if first interview)	Answer yes or no. If yes, record details.	Answer: yes no
Q11: Has your client participated in any voluntary work or work placements since the last assessment? (Or in the last three months if first interview)	Answer yes or no. If yes, record details.	Answer: yes no

<p>Q12: Has your client attended any interviews since the last assessment? (Or in the last three months if first interview)</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If yes, record details.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>
<p>Q13: Has your client applied to do any courses or skills-based training since the last assessment? (Or in the last three months if first interview)</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If yes, record details.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>

Implications for the action plan

Consider the answers to the previous two sections, and the associated explanations. What are the implications for the action plan? These thoughts should be shared with your client. Particular things to consider:

- Are there any issues of motivation and/or confidence?
- Does your client need support with particular tasks (for example, developing a CV, job-search or an application for a job)?
- Are there some underlying issues that need to be explored (for example, mobility, computer use)? These can be explored in other sections.
- Are there any areas which are emerging which are of interest to your client (for example, voluntary work, work placement, particular areas of work)?

Access to information

These questions are about accessing and producing information. Computers are a very important method of accessing information and there are some additional questions about that in the next section.

<p>Q14: [screening] Can your client read print from a printed page (with or without a low vision aid)?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If no (not at all), Q18 to Q21 can be missed out.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>
<p>Q15: Which of the following statements best describes your use of magnifiers or low vision aids (for distance and/or near vision)? Choose one.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I use them most days 2. I use them some days 3. I own one or more magnifiers / low vision aid but I rarely / never use 4. I do not use magnifiers or low vision aids 	<p>Answer (1-4):</p>
<p>Q16: [screening] Can your client use a computer (with or without assistive technology)?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If no (not at all), record details of the reason / explanation for not using computers, for example, is the lack of use of ICT linked to knowledge of assistive technology and/or no experience of ICT with or without sight loss.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no Notes:</p>
<p>Q17: [screening] Can your client read braille?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. If no (not at all), Q22 to Q25 can be missed out.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>

Reading print and residual vision

(Skip this section if not applicable)

Q18: Is your client able to read ordinary newspaper print (with or without a magnifier or vision aid)?	Answer yes or no.	Answer: yes no
Q19: Is your client able to read a large print book (with or without a magnifier or vision aid)?	Answer yes or no.	Answer: yes no
Q20: Is your client able to read a newspaper headline (with or without a magnifier or vision aid)?	Answer yes or no. Record details as required.	Answer: yes no Notes:
Q21: Preferred print size?	Size of print is measured in point size (for example, 14 point).	Answer:

Braille reading and writing

(Skip this section if not applicable)

<p>Q22: Which of the following statements describes your braille reading best:</p>	<p>1. I read braille only to get by 2. I read braille fluently on a daily basis 3. I am somewhere in between</p> <p>Add notes about your client's reading habits as required; for example, Grade 1 (uncontracted) or Grade 2 (contracted) braille, braille for labelling, braille for sustained reading, reading speed.</p>	<p>Answer (1-3):</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>Q23: Does your client write/produce braille manually using a Perkins Braille (or equivalent)?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>
<p>Q24: Does your client write/produce braille through a computer and embosser?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>
<p>Q25: Does your client write/produce braille using an electronic braille device (for example, BrailleNote)?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>

Computer skills

These questions are about computers and assistive technology.

At the end is a chance to reflect upon the implications of this and the previous section upon the action plan.

Q26: Ask your client: "Overall, would you say you were a confident computer user?"	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "very confident" and 1 is "not at all confident".	Answer (1-6):
Q27: Does your client have access to a computer that they can use on a daily basis?	Answer yes or no.	Answer: yes no
Q28: Does your client use a computer without any additional access technology?	Answer yes or no.	Answer: yes no
Q29: Does your client use a computer with some additional changes (for example, using Windows accessibility options to increase font size, size and colour of cursor)?	Answer yes or no.	Answer: yes no
Q30: Does your client use a computer with screen magnifier software (for example, Supernova, ZoomText, Lunar)?	Answer yes or no.	Answer: yes no
Q31: Does your client use a computer with screen reading (speech output) software (for example, JAWS, ZoomText, Supernova, Hal)?	Answer yes or no.	Answer: yes no

Computer skills (continued)

Q32: [screening] Ask your client: “How confident are you writing a document using a word processor?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very confident” and 1 is “not at all confident”.	Answer (1-6):
Q33: [screening] Ask your client: “How confident are you using email?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very confident” and 1 is “not at all confident”.	Answer (1-6):
Q34: [screening] Ask your client: “How confident are you using the Internet?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very confident” and 1 is “not at all confident”.	Answer (1-6):
Q35: [screening] Ask your client: “How frequently do you write a document using a word processor?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very frequently (at least once a day)” and 1 is “not at all”.	Answer (1-6):
Q36: [screening] Ask your client: “How frequently do you use email?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very frequently (at least once a day)” and 1 is “not at all”.	Answer (1-6):
Q37: [screening] Ask your client: “How frequently do you use the Internet?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very frequently (at least once a day)” and 1 is “not at all”.	Answer (1-6):

Implications for the action plan

Consider the answers to the previous two sections, and the associated explanations. What are the implications for the action plan? These thoughts should be shared with your client. Particular things to consider:

- Are there particular ways of accessing information which need attention (for example, computer use, hard copy print)?
- Is there evidence that your client has information access issues only, or may there be underlying literacy difficulties? This can be explored in other sections.
- Are there particular general approaches which could be usefully developed (for example, computers, low vision aids, braille)?
- Are there specific software applications which can be usefully developed (for example, access technology, word processor, email)?

Independent travel

These questions are about employment opportunities in the area where your client lives, as well as your client's ability to travel independently.

<p>Q38: For the employment advisor to consider: Where does your client live in relation to employment opportunities? For example, is it in a city centre location close to many employers with good transport links? Is it a rural location with few local employers and with poor transport links?</p>	<p>Employment advisor to score: on a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "employment easily accessible" and 1 is "not at all accessible". Record details.</p>	<p>Answer (1-6):</p>
<p>Q39: Establish your client's current approaches to mobility.</p>	<p>Important considerations are: mobility aids (for example, symbol cane, long cane, guide dog); use of public transport compared to private transport (ie, taxis, driven by family or friends); impact of daylight / night on mobility outside; use of sighted guides; use of GPS device.</p>	<p>Notes:</p>
<p>Q40: [screening] Ask your client: "How confident are you travelling independently from home to a familiar place in the daylight (ie, on foot or using local public transport)?"</p>	<p>On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "very confident" and 1 is "not at all confident". If your client only travels with the support of others or similar, score 1. Clarify if the answer would be different in the hours of darkness.</p>	<p>Answer (1-6):</p>
<p>Q41: [screening] Ask your client: "How often do you travel independently from home to a familiar place in the daylight (ie, on foot or using local public transport)?"</p>	<p>On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "everyday" and 1 is "never". If your client only travels with the support of others or similar, score 1.</p>	<p>Answer (1-6):</p>

Independent travel (continued)

Q42: [screening] Ask your client: “How confident are you travelling independently from home to an unfamiliar place in the daylight (ie, on foot or using local public transport)?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very confident” and 1 is “not at all confident”. If your client only travels with the support of others or similar, score 1. Clarify if the answer would be different in the hours of darkness.	Answer (1-6):
Q43: Ask your client: “How often do you travel independently from home to an unfamiliar place in the daylight (ie, on foot or using local public transport)?”	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “everyday” and 1 is “never”. If your client only travels with the support of others or similar, score 1.	Answer (1-6):

Implications for the action plan

Consider the answers to the previous section. What are the implications for the action plan? These thoughts should be shared with your client. Particular things to consider:

- Would your client benefit from mobility training? This might be linked to specific routes or types of journey. Or it might be more general mobility skills training which are needed (for example, long cane skills)?
- Does your client have anxiety about travelling alone, or feeling uncomfortable and conspicuous using mobility aids?
- Are there particular mobility challenges for your client given where they live, the transport availability, and the locality of work opportunities? How could these be addressed?

Vision

These questions are about level of vision and how your client is able to discuss its impact upon potential employment. Some questions are sensitive; it is fine for your client to choose not to answer a question but please make a note.

Q44: What is your client's registration status?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Registered as blind (severely sight impaired)2. Registered as partially sighted (sight impaired)3. Registered, but unsure of status4. Unsure if registered5. Not registered <p>Add eye condition if known; if relevant, note if the client has loss of central vision (which often has an impact on print reading) or loss of peripheral vision (which often has an impact on mobility).</p>	Answer (1-5): Notes:
Q45: How long has your client been blind or partially sighted?	Add number of years or age first diagnosed.	Answer:
Q46: How much can your client see now compared with a year ago?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Greater than a year ago2. Less than a year ago3. About the same4. Don't know	Answer (1-4):

Vision (continued)

<p>Q47: Has your client been given any information about whether their vision is likely to improve or deteriorate?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improve (more vision)2. Deteriorate (less vision)3. Stay the same4. Unsure	<p>Answer (1-4):</p>
<p>Q48: [screening] Ask your client: “Evidence suggests many employers assume blind and partially sighted people cannot perform certain tasks because of their sight loss. How confident do you feel discussing your skills with a potential employer?”</p>	<p>On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very confident” and 1 is “not at all confident”. Clarify if they have done this at interview before, or ask for examples of what they might say.</p>	<p>Answer (1-6):</p>
<p>Q49: [screening] Ask your client: “Are you confident discussing any adjustments you may require with a potential employer?”</p>	<p>On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is “very confident” and 1 is “not at all confident”. Clarify if they have done this before, and ask for examples of what they might say. For example, modifications to the work environment or modifications to the work task, or both?</p>	<p>Answer (1-6):</p>
<p>Q50: Does your client know about Access to Work?</p>	<p>Answer yes or no. Record details.</p>	<p>Answer: yes no</p>

Health-related issues

This section asks about additional health-related issues or barriers to employment. For example, someone may have a physical disability or other health condition that might affect their ability to work, or restrict the hours they want to work. Similarly, they may be experiencing mental health challenges, for example, depression, that would also affect their ability to work.

Q51: Does your client have any long term disability (other than sight loss) that may impact or restrict their ability to work?	Answer yes, no or unsure. Record details.	Answer: yes no unsure
Q52: Does your client have any long term health condition that may impact or restrict their ability to work (for example, depression, mental health issues)?	Answer yes, no or unsure. Record details. Record here any concerns you may have about additional support needs. These notes must be shared with your client.	Answer: yes no unsure

Implications for the action plan

Consider the answers to the previous two sections. What are the implications for the action plan? These thoughts should be shared with your client. Particular things to consider:

- If your client seems to know little about their sight loss, might it be useful for them to learn more about it from an appropriate vision specialist?
- If your client seems uncomfortable discussing their sight loss (or any other health condition), how might this impact upon their search for employment?
- If required, what actions might help your client be able to communicate their needs and requirements more effectively?
- Do you need to explain the benefits of Access to Work? If your client was unaware of Access to Work, what impact might this have on their confidence in applying for work?
- Are there any particular workplace adjustments which your client will benefit from?
- Does your client's sight loss or health conditions impact upon the type of work which might be most appropriate for them (for example, part-time work, not working alone).

Target job

This section asks questions in relation your client's aspirations in relation to employment and it is encouraged to reflect upon how realistic these aspirations are. These questions should naturally lead into a fuller discussion of the action plan.

Q53: [screening] Ask your client: "How important is being in work (voluntary or paid) to you at this moment?"	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "very important" and 1 is "not at all important". Record details.	Answer (1-6):
Q54: Ask your client: "Do you know the job or kind of work you want to do?"	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "have a very clear idea" and 1 is "have no idea". This could be voluntary work, part-time work or full-time employment. It could be a specific job (for example, housing officer) or a type of employment (for example, administration). If known, record details.	Answer (1-6):

If your client has no idea what kind of work they want to do, Q55 and Q56 should be rephrased. Ask your client if they think they have the skills (Q55) and qualifications (Q56) for any kind of available work, rather than for a particular job.

Q55: Ask your client: "Do you think you have the skills to get this job / this kind of work?"	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "I think I have all the skills" and 1 is "I have very few or none of the skills." For example, literacy and numeracy skills, vocational training or experience, physical or manual skills.	Answer (1-6):
Q56: Ask your client: "Do you think you have the qualifications to get this job / this kind of work?"	On a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "I think I have all the qualifications required" and 1 is "I have very few or none of the qualifications required".	Answer (1-6):

Target job (continued)

Q57: Relevant qualifications, skills and training.	Record details of relevant qualifications, skills and any other courses or previous in-work training.	Notes:
Q58: [screening] For the employment advisor to consider: Are your client's current skills and qualifications transferable to the current job market?	Employment advisor to score: on a scale of 1 to 6, if 6 is "yes, there are many transferable skills" and 1 is "there are limited transferable skills for the current job market". Record details concerning what skills are transferable in your opinion, and share with your client.	Answer (1-6): Notes:

Implications for the action plan

Consider the answers to the previous section. What are the implications for the action plan? These thoughts should be shared with your client. Particular things to consider:

- How important is employment to your client at this point in time?
- Why is it important? Will this influence their motivation to find work?
- What evidence is there of your client's literacy and numeracy skills?
- Is a further assessment or referral required?
- What evidence is there that your client's job aspirations are realistic?
- Does your client's skills, qualifications and literacy and numeracy levels match job aspirations?

Next steps

Following this assessment and discussion with your client, the employment advisor should use the Action Plan Development document.

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RNIB registered charity numbers 226227 and SC039316

Action for Blind People registered charity numbers 205913 and SC040050

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