

Managing with Sight Loss



An information handbook for Visually
Impaired residents of West Berkshire



West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

Help and support for blind and partially sighted people in West Berkshire

If you require this information in an alternative format or translation, please contact:

**West Berkshire Council Community Care
Sensory Needs Team**
Turnhams Green Park
Pincents Lane
Tilehurst
RG31 4UH

Telephone: 01635 503704

Email: Sensoryneeds@westberks.gov.uk

www.westberks.gov.uk

We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call the Sensory Needs Team on Telephone 01635 503704.

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Section 1:

The West Berkshire Visual Impairment Service

The Sensory Needs Service at West Berkshire Council is based within Adult Social Care. However we work with people of all ages, including children and young people, who have a significant sensory loss which impacts on their everyday lives.

Within our team we have trained specialist workers called Rehabilitation Officers for Visual Impairment who can give you advice, support, skills training and information relating to your sight loss. We aim to enable you to live as independent a life as possible.

We can discuss with you your needs and can provide help with:

- Specialist equipment
- Advice on managing with reading and writing and information on alternative formats
- Tips, techniques and training in all aspects of daily living
- A programme of training for safe travel and mobility
- Advice and support in the use of magnifiers and lighting
- Information on, and signposting to, organisations and services who may be able to give additional support and help

If you would like to have a visit from one of our Rehabilitation Officers for Visual Impairment then please contact us for further information.

Sensory Needs Service

Visual Impairment Team
West Berkshire Council
Turnhams Green Park
Pincents Lane
Tilehurst
Berkshire
RG31 4UH

Telephone 01635 503704

Email Sensoryneeds@westberks.gov.uk

Section 2:

Registration as Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted or Severely Sight Impaired/Blind

If you are experiencing difficulties with your vision and your optician cannot correct the problem with glasses, you may need to be referred to an eye consultant, known as a Consultant Ophthalmologist, at a specialist Eye Clinic. Your optician or doctor can make this referral.

The Consultant Ophthalmologist can assess your vision and identify any problems that may be causing your sight difficulties. The Consultant will check your level of sight loss to identify whether you meet criteria for legal Certification. If your sight loss does meet criteria, the Consultant will complete a Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI), with your consent, and a copy will be sent to us direct. The CVI identifies whether your sight loss has met criteria to be registered as Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted or Severely Sight Impaired/Blind. We will contact you to check whether you then wish to be officially registered with West Berkshire Council with your sight loss as set out in the CVI. Once you agree to be registered you will remain on our register for as long as you live in West Berkshire.

Registration is entirely voluntary but highly recommended, it may help you access certain services and obtain certain benefits, either now or in the future. Although people with sight loss can access our services without having a CVI, once we do receive a CVI this automatically triggers a referral for you to receive support from our team and we will contact you direct to discuss if you would like to go ahead with this.

Certification and registration are separate parts of a statutory process. Registration is completed locally and cannot be offered without issue and sight of a CVI; if you move to another Local Authority, let us know and we can forward your CVI to the relevant team where you will be living so they can offer registration for that area and continue to support you if required.

Proof of registration

Once we have your confirmation that you wish to be registered with West Berkshire Council then we will send you a yellow card which provides proof of your registration status within West Berkshire Council.

Section 3:

Benefits and Concessions of being registered Sight Impaired or Severely Sight Impaired

There are a number of benefits to becoming registered as either Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted or Severely Sight Impaired/Blind. Although there is no guarantee you will be eligible, registration can help you apply for the following benefits amongst others:

Attendance Allowance

If you are over the age of 65 and require a lot of support as a result of your visual impairment and/or other disabilities then you could be eligible for this allowance. It is paid at two different rates and the amount you could get depends on the level of care you need. Other benefits you may be in receipt of can increase if you get Attendance Allowance.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

If you are aged between 16 and state retirement age, have a long-term health condition or disability and difficulties with activities related to daily living and/or mobility then you could be eligible for PIP. The rate of this benefit depends on how your condition affects you, not the condition itself. It is comprised of two components – daily living and mobility. You may get the mobility component if you need help going out or moving around. You'll need an assessment to work out the level of help you get and your rate will be regularly re-assessed. You will be assessed by a health professional and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) makes a decision about the level of your claim based on this assessment, your application and any additional supporting evidence.

Disability Living allowance (DLA)

DLA is now being replaced by PIP.

If you already receive DLA and were born **after** 8 April 1948 or are 16 years old or over then you will continue to get your DLA until the DWP write to you to advise you when this will end. This letter will then invite you to apply for PIP and tell you what to do next.

If you already receive DLA and were born **on or before** 8 April 1948 then this will continue and you will not be entitled to claim for PIP.

New claims for DLA can only be made if you are under 16 years old.

For more information on Attendance Allowance, PIP or DLA then go to the DWP's website www.gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline

Or call the following numbers on Monday to Friday between 8am-6pm:

Attendance Allowance 0800 731 0122

DLA (if you were born on or before 8 April 1948) 0800 731 0122

DLA (if you were born after 8 April 1948) 0800 121 4600

PIP 0800 121 4433

Blind Person's Allowance

You can claim Blind Person's Allowance if you're registered as Severely Sight Impaired/Blind. It allows an extra amount of tax free allowance, meaning you can earn more before you start paying income tax. If you and your partner are both eligible, you'll each get an allowance. You can also transfer your Blind Person's Allowance to your spouse if you don't pay tax or don't earn enough to use all of your allowance. Our team can supply confirmation of your registration status to you if required.

For further information contact HM Revenue & Customs:

Telephone 0300 200 3301

Monday to Friday 8am-8pm or Saturday 8am-4pm

www.gov.uk/blind-persons-allowance

Access to Work

An Access to Work grant can pay for practical support if you have a disability to help you start working, stay in employment, move into self-employment or start a business (the grant is not for business start up costs). This grant does not have to be paid back and it does not affect your other benefits. There is no set amount for this grant, how much you get will depend on your individual circumstances. The grant can help towards things such as equipment adaptations; specialist equipment; fares to work if you can't use public transport; a support worker; disability awareness training for colleagues.

For more information contact Access to Work on:

Telephone 0800 121 7479

Monday to Friday from 8am-6pm

www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Students with a disability who are in higher education living in England can apply for a DSA. The support you get depends on your individual needs, not your income. DSA is paid on top of any other student finance and can help towards the extra costs you may have due to your disability. You can find more information on the Gov.uk website:

www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa

Travel Concessions

Once you're registered you will be eligible to apply for a Disabled Person's Railcard for reductions on National Rail. If you are travelling with a companion you will be eligible for one-off discounts on tickets with proof of registration. Contact them Monday to Sunday 7am – 10pm:

Telephone 0345 605 0525

www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/

West Berkshire Council also offers concessions to those who are registered and you could be entitled to a free bus pass. Contact West Berkshire Council, Travel Concessions Department on:

Telephone 01635 519394

Email transport@westberks.gov.uk

www.info.westberks.gov.uk/concessionaryfares

Disabled Parking (Blue Badge)

If you are registered Severely Sight Impaired/Blind you will be eligible for a Blue Badge to use for parking when travelling in any car. Blue Badge holders are entitled to West Berkshire parking concessions as follows:

- Free parking in all West Berkshire Council car parks (except Newbury Library and Newbury KFC)
- Free parking in the on-street areas where parking charges apply
- Up to 3 hours parking on yellow line restrictions, provided an obstruction is not being made

If you are registered Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted you could be eligible for a Blue Badge but only if you have additional mobility problems.

Contact the Blue Badge Team for more information or to obtain an application form on:

Telephone 01635 503276

Email bluebadges@westberks.gov.uk

www.info.westberks.gov.uk/article/27876/Blue-Badges-Disabled-Parking

Free NHS Eye Tests (free to people under 16 years old or over 60)

Eye tests are free to those who are registered Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted or Severely Sight Impaired/Blind. It is important to continue having eye tests regularly even if you are no longer attending an Eye Clinic, as the Optician can help identify any new problems that might develop. If you have Glaucoma then your parents, children and siblings are also entitled to free NHS eye tests.

Free Directory Enquires 195 Service

If you are having difficulties accessing the telephone directory, you can sign up to the free BT Directory Enquiry service, even if you are not a BT customer. Once you have joined the service, all you do is call 195 and you speak to an operator who will find the number you require. You will need to fill in an application form and have it countersigned by a doctor, nurse or other medical practitioner. Call free for an application form:

Telephone 0800 587 0195

Telephones for the Blind (TFTB)

A charity aiming to provide access to telecommunications for Blind and visually impaired residents of the United Kingdom, who live alone or with a disabled partner/ spouse. Please note grant applications must be submitted by one of our ROVI's. For general enquiries email TFTB:

Email info@tftb.org.uk

TV Licence

If you are Severely Sight Impaired/Blind and can provide the appropriate evidence, you are eligible to apply for a 50% concession. Your licence will also cover anyone who lives with you as long as the licence is in your name. Complete an application form on-line:

www.tvlicensing.co.uk/

British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF)

Providing specially adapted radios, CD players or portable streaming devices to help improve daily lives of people with visual impairment. Free on loan to UK residents who are in receipt of means tested benefits, or available to buy for those who are not. Berkshire Vision is the local agent for BWBF. To find out if you are eligible contact Berkshire Vision on:

Telephone 0118 987 2803

Articles for the Blind free postage scheme

Royal Mail operate a scheme called Articles for the Blind which allows Blind and Partially Sighted people to send certain items of post free of charge. Items covered by the scheme include books, papers, large print letters, Braille items, computer discs and CDs which have been prepared specifically for visually impaired people. Royal Mail treats items sent by the scheme as first class mail. For more information contact Royal Mail Customer Services on:

Telephone 0345 774 0740

Energy suppliers and meter readings

If you are unable to see to read your meters then your energy supplier can arrange for a meter reader to visit you quarterly to do this for you. You can also arrange with your energy suppliers a password of your choice so that when their meter readers visit you they identify themselves using this password.

Grants

There are a number of charities and organisations that can help with financial assistance if you are Blind or Partially Sighted. You can contact some of these organisations yourself, such as Rotary Club, Round Table or Lions Club. Other Trust Funds prefer to remain anonymous but you can apply for a grant via our team who will deal with the Trust Fund directly on your behalf. RNIB can offer grants of up to £500 for certain items of technology to people who are registered Blind or Partially Sighted who are on a means-tested benefit and have been unable to obtain statutory funding.

Agencies who can advise on benefits, concessions and employment issues

West Berkshire Council for advice on Housing Benefit and Council Tax reductions:

<http://info.westberks.gov.uk/article/27111/Tax-and-Benefits>

Council Tax Team:

Telephone 01635 519520

Email counciltax@westberks.gov.uk

Benefits Team:

Telephone 01635 519258

Email benefits@westberks.gov.uk

The Citizens Advice Bureau for advice on benefits and concessions:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/

Newbury Citizens Advice Branch

www.citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk/

Telephone 0300 222 5941

Jobcentre Plus for advice on employment related issues and benefits:

www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

Monday to Friday 8am-6pm

National Jobcentre Enquiry Line

Telephone

0800 055 6688

Benefit

Jobseeker's Allowance

0800 169 0310

Employment and Support Allowance

0800 055 6688

Universal Credit

0800 328 5644

Maternity Allowance

0800 169 0283

Bereavement Support Payment

0800 151 2012

Social Fund

0800 169 0140

Income Support

0800 169 0310

(To report change in circumstance only, there are no new claims for Income Support)

Section 4:

Making the most of your residual vision

It is important to use any vision you have. You cannot normally damage your eyes by using them although you may find they get tired much more quickly than before. Making things bigger, bolder and brighter will help you get the most out of your vision.

Bigger

You can often make things easier to see by making them larger. A magnifier for example, will help you achieve this with printed material. If you have a computer you can make simple changes to the display which enlarges icons and text, we can provide information on how to do this. You could also print things from the computer in large print or enlarge text or documents on a photocopier.

Bolder - contrast

Making things bolder helps with identification or reading. If you are writing things down for yourself, try using a black marker pen on white or yellow paper. The use of good contrast can also be helpful. For example, using a white chopping board for chopping vegetables, such as carrots, makes their colour stand out, or using a white plate against a dark coloured mat or table cloth. Use contrasting coloured tape to highlight things such as light switches, work top edges, shelves.

Brighter

Lighting is another effective way of enhancing your residual vision. Everyone is different and prefers different levels of light but finding the most appropriate level to your needs can help enormously. For example, using an angle poise lamp for close up tasks like viewing printed material can be useful as the light can be directed straight onto what you are looking at. Try using daylight bulbs or LED lighting. Keep lighting levels bright and even throughout the home.

Using your other senses (hearing, touch, smell and taste) is important and can help you manage with certain tasks for which you have relied on your vision until now.

Section 5:

Help with reading and writing

Low Vision Aid Clinics

Following an assessment by a Consultant Ophthalmologist, you may be referred to the Low Vision Aid Clinic. Here a clinician can assess for lenses that magnify near or distant objects and what is likely to help you for a particular task. They can then loan the most appropriate aid, for example handheld magnifiers, suitable for your specific eye condition.

Magnification

For people who wish to read large amounts of print and require stronger magnification to do so, there are a number of electronic reading aids available, both portable and desktop varieties. These electronic aids are not available from the NHS but our team may be able to supply some portable aids which we would first assess your need for. Electronic aids can also be supplied as part of an Access to Work agreement, if you are in employment, or by other organisations through charitable grants.

Print

- Write in large print and more clearly by using felt tip or marker pens.
- Most service providers, for example banks, have a duty under the Equalities Act to provide information for you in large print upon request.
- Large print books are available from the library and a large print weekly newspaper called Big Print is available from the RNIB on subscription.
- Some board games, puzzle books, calendars, address books and playing cards are also available in large print versions. Various charities and organisations sell many of these items and Berkshire Vision can help you with ordering.
- Try new technology, for example a tablet, which you can download books onto. Pick a device with functions that allow you to enlarge and change the contrast and colours of the text and typeface.

Audio Libraries

A wide range of recorded material is available on compact disc or MP3. Audio books are available via your local library, through the post or digital download from organisations such as Calibre or the RNIB. Audio books can also be purchased from high street book sellers.

Newspapers and magazines are also available in audio formats. The Newbury Weekly News is available free of charge, application forms can be obtained from us, or apply online. National Talking Newspapers and Magazines can be obtained by subscription from the RNIB.

Reading by Touch

There are two systems that can be used to read by touch: Braille and Moon. Braille consists of raised letters made out of a combination of six dots whereas Moon letters are based on raised shapes. Basic skills can be learnt quickly and used for labelling or with playing cards. Postage is free for materials sent in Braille or Moon. Our specialist workers can give you more information on training in these techniques.

Writing

- Good contrast will help you write and read back what you have written. Use good contrast between the colour of your pen and the paper you use, e.g. black ink on white paper. As mentioned before, felt tip and marker pens may help too, provided you write in large print and clearly.
- Paper with bold lines is available from the Partially Sighted Society along with writing frames, signature and address guides, all of which could help you write in straight lines. Many banks and building societies will provide a template for your cheque book if requested.
- An alternative to writing notes is recording messages on cassette or on a pocket memo recorder.

Telephone

Write out your telephone numbers in large bold print to make them easier to read back. Phones with memory buttons are useful for storing important and emergency numbers. There are also many big button telephones on the market which can be bought from specialist equipment suppliers and often through high street retailers. There are a number of stickers in large print available that can be applied to many telephone keypads. BT free Directory Enquires service is available for visually impaired people who are able to confirm their disability.

Section 6:

Making daily tasks easier

Pouring hot and cold drinks

Pouring drinks on the draining board or on a tray with a rim will help prevent spilling liquid on the floor. Using contrasting colours can help, for example tea and coffee stand out more clearly in cups and teapots which are white inside. Equipment is available to warn you of the level of liquid you are pouring. Alternatively, one-cup dispensers are great for pouring just the right amount of water.

Marking equipment

Some suppliers of cookers and domestic appliances can arrange to have tactile controls fitted so you can locate and set them by touch.

Alternatively a liquid substance called Tactimark or self adhesive raised dots called Bump-ons can be used to mark dials or buttons on equipment so they are easier to see or feel. Hi-marking and Bump-ons are useful for marking many other items, for example remote controls and radios.

Because they come in different colours, they provide a good contrast for marking things like light switches and key holes.

Telling the time

A wide range of clocks and watches are available for visually impaired people. Some are easy to see, some can be read by touch and some speak the time at the press of a button. It is always useful if you position a clock or timepiece where you can easily see it or reach it.

Keeping safe

Remove trip hazards such as rugs or loose carpets in the house or broken/loose paving slabs in the garden. Keep work surfaces clear and free from clutter. Paint white strips along edges of steps outside the house. Put handrails on stairways and make sure they are well lit. Trim back low hanging branches in the garden and keep pathways clear.

Section 8:

Travel, sport and leisure

Audio Books and Newspapers

Calibre (Talking Books)

New Road, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5XQ

Telephone 01293 432339

Email enquiries@calibre.org.uk

www.calibreaudio.org.uk

Kennet Cassette (aka Newbury Talking Newspaper)

Gilbert Court, Bath Road, Thatcham, Berks RG18 3AG

Telephone 01635 200443

www.kennetcassette.co.uk/

Listening Books

12 Lant Street, London SE1 1QH

Telephone 0207 407 9417

Email info@listening-books.org.uk

www.listening-books.org.uk

Living Paintings

Touch to See Books (tactile and audio books)

Unit 8, Kingsclere Park, Kingsclere, Newbury RG20 4SW

Telephone 01635 299771

Email library@livingpaintings.org

www.livingpaintings.org/

National Talking Newspapers and Magazines

RNIB Newsagent, Bakewell Road, Peterborough PE2 6XU

Telephone 0303 123 9999

Email helpline@rnib.org.uk

www.tnauk.org.uk

RNIB Talking Books Service

Telephone 0303 123 9999

Email helpline@rnib.org.uk

www.rnib.org.uk/talking-books-service

Large Print Publications

Big Print (weekly newspapers)

RNIB Customer Services, PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS
Telephone 0303 123 9999
<https://www.rnib.org.uk/newsagent>

National Library for the Blind (Children's books in large print on loan)

RNIB National Library Service, PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS
Telephone 0303 123 9999

Local Clubs and Support Groups

Berkshire Vision run a variety of different clubs and peer support groups across Berkshire.

Telephone 0118 987 2803
www.berkshirevision.org.uk/peer-support-groups/

Macular Degeneration Support Groups

Goring-on-Thames: second Friday every other month 2.00-3.30pm
Newbury & West Berkshire: third Tuesday each month 2.00-3.30pm
Telephone 01264 560

Newbury Library Book Club for Visually Impaired

Fourth Monday each month 10.30am to 11.30am
Newbury Central Library, The Wharf, Newbury RG14 5AU
Telephone 01635 519900

Retina UK Berkshire Local Peer Support Group Meeting provides a welcome, safe and friendly opportunity to meet and share experiences, tips and information. For more details and meeting dates visit:

www.retinauk.org.uk/information-support/retina-uk-local-peer-support-groups/
Or contact Mark Baxter on 07889 595783
Or email services@retinauk.org.uk

Touch to See is a sociable discussion group for those with visual impairments who meet monthly for chat and a cuppa followed by guided sessions with art and craft using resources from the Living Paintings Library. For more details or to book an advance ticket go to the Corn Exchange website:

www.cornexchangenew.com/event/touch_to_see
Or contact the box office on 01635 522733

TV and Radio

Audio Description (AD)

To enable AD TV programs, you'll need digital TV which you get via Freeview, Sky, Virgin Media, Freesat and YouView. It is either built into your TV or is a set top box connected to your TV. For more information visit RNIB's website: www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-home-and-leisure-television-radio-and-film/audio-description

In Touch

Radio magazine programme for visually impaired people.
Broadcast on BBC Radio 4: Tuesday evenings from 8:40pm until 9pm
Room 5045, BBC Broadcasting House London, W1A 1AA
www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxww

Local Community and Voluntary Transport

There are many local volunteer car schemes in West Berkshire offering door to door transport which can be used for appointments and regular shopping trips. West Berkshire Council has a useful leaflet with details of these schemes plus other information on transport and travel including Shopmobility; Readibus Dial-a-Ride; Community Care Transport plus much more.
<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/publictransport>

National travel

National Rail and some coach firms offer reduced fares for people registered with a visual impairment. Both can offer assistance, along with ferries and airlines, if notice is given of your travel plans. Check individual websites for more information on these services.

National Rail

Telephone 03457 484950 (or call your local train station)

www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/44965.aspx

Holidays

Berkshire Vision arrange group holidays for members.

www.berkshirevision.org.uk

Disabled Access Holidays an online travel agent offering services to disabled people throughout the UK.

Telephone 0800 622 6000

Email info@disabledaccessholidays.com

www.disabledaccessholidays.com/

RNIB have information on holidays for Blind and Partially Sighted people.
www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-home-and-leisure/holidays

Seable providing accessible tailored holidays for visually impaired people.
Telephone 0203 375 6947
www.seable.co.uk/

Traveleyes UK tour operator offering holidays for Blind and sighted travellers.
Telephone 0113 834 6094
www.traveleyes-international.com/

Sport

Berkshire Stags Visually Impaired Cricket
www.berkshirstags.co.uk

Berkshire Vision – Sporting Activities
Telephone 0118 987 2803
Email info@berkshirevision.org.uk
www.berkshirevision.org.uk/sport

Blind Cricket England & Wales
Telephone 07769 909906
Email JohnGarbett8@virginmedia.com
www.bcew.co.uk/

Blind Veterans Sports & Recreation
Telephone 0800 389 7979
Email info@blindveterans.org.uk
www.blindveterans.org.uk/

British Blind Sport
Telephone 01926 424247
Email info@britishblindsport.org.uk
www.britishblindsport.org.uk

Metro Blind Sport
Email info@metroblindsport.org
www.metroblindsport.org/

Newbury Velo Accessible Cycling
Cycling without Sight – The Tandem Project
www.newburyvelo.cc/accessible-cycling

Section 9:

Useful addresses and contacts

Local voluntary agencies

Berkshire Vision (BV)

Visually impaired residents in West Berkshire can access help and support from BV. BV is a local registered charity with over 100 years of expertise and experience in the provision of advice and support to Blind and Partially Sighted people across Berkshire.

As well as providing information and support to help people live independently and safely, they also arrange holidays and run a children's activity club; various social clubs throughout the county; a range of sporting activities for all ages; and Home Visiting and Telephone Befriending Services. The society has a well-equipped Resource Centre at their headquarters in Reading, where one of their Resources Officers can guide you through the many options available to make sure you find the right solution for you. Please contact BV to arrange a time to visit the centre so that they can be sure they are available to show you around.

Midleton House, 5 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR
Telephone 0118 987 2803
Email info@berkshirevision.org.uk
www.berkshirevision.org.uk

Reading Association for the Blind

Walford Hall, Carey Street, Reading RG1 7JS
Telephone 0118 957 2960
Email info@rabsightloss.org

Guide Dogs

If you have significant sight loss and are unable to make effective use of your residual vision, you can apply to train with a guide dog. You must be over 16 and should already have proficient mobility/cane skills. Guide Dogs also offer a My Guide service locally. Ask one of our ROVI's for more information.

National organisations

Blind Veterans

Supporting people who have served in the Armed Forces, or who have completed National Service, and are now living with significant sight loss. A great range of services including rehabilitation and training, equipment, nursing and residential care, sports and recreation.

12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD
Telephone 0800 389 7979
Email info@blindveterans.org.uk
www.blindveterans.org.uk/

Guide Dogs

As well as their Guide Dog programme to aid independent mobility, Guide Dogs also provide My Sighted Guide service to get you out and about as well as companion dogs to offer friendship at home.

Hillfields, Burghfield Common, Reading RG7 3YG
Helpline 0800 781 1444
Email information@guidedogs.org.uk
www.guidedogs.org.uk/

Macular Society

The Macular Society is an excellent resource for information, advice, support and updates on the condition. As well as funding research into cures for the disease, they provide services covering support groups, telephone counselling, befriending and treatment buddies.

PO Box 1870, Andover SP10 9AD
Helpline 0300 3030 111
Email help@macularsociety.org
www.macularsociety.org/

Retina UK

A national charity dedicated solely to working for people affected by inherited sight loss. Services and support include: diagnosis & beyond, looking after your vision, talk and support and local peer support groups.

Wharf House, Stratford Road, Buckingham MK18 1TD
Helpline 0300 111 4000
Email helpline@RetinaUK.org.uk
www.retinauk.org.uk/

Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB)

Providing a huge range of support and services including an audio newsagent and library service; emotional support with trained counsellors; national campaigns; advice and support on common eye conditions; benefits and concessions; employment and education.

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE
Telephone 0303 123 9999
(Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm / Saturday 9am – 1pm)
Email helpline@rnib.org.uk
www.rnib.org.uk

Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT)

With a focus on education, employment and engagement, TPT are a great resource for technologies, supporting grant applications and working with visually impaired people to influence change and have their say.

Tavistock House South, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9LG
Telephone 020 8995 0880
Email info@pocklington-trust.org.uk
www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/

Other National support groups and organisations

Association of Blind Asians

53-55 Harehills Avenue, Leeds, LS8 4EX
Telephone: 0113 210 3347
Email info@abaleeds.org.uk
www.diabetes.org.uk/

Diabetes UK

Wells Lawrence House, 126 Back Church Lane, London E1 1FH
Telephone 0345 123 2399
Email helpline@diabetes.org.uk
www.diabetes.org.uk/

Glaucoma UK

15A High Point Business Village, Henwood, Ashford, Kent TN24 8DH
Telephone 01233 648170
Email helpline@glaucoma.uk
www.glaucoma.uk/

Jewish Care

Amelie House, Maurice & Vivienne Wohl Campus, 221 Golders Green Road,
London NW11 9DQ

Telephone 0208 922 2222

Email helpline@jcare.org

www.jewishcare.org/

National Federation of the Blind of the UK

Sir John Wilson House, 215 Kirkgate, Wakefield WF1 1JG

Telephone 01924 291313

Email admin@nfbuk.org

www.nfbuk.org/

Nystagmus Network

70 Hyde Vale, London SE10 8HP

Telephone 0290 045 4242

Email info@nystagmusnet.org

www.nystagmusnetwork.org/

Faith

Torch Trust – Christian sight loss charity

Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road, Market Harborough LE16 9HL

Telephone 01858 438260

Email info@torchtrust.org

www.torchtrust.org/

Adult Education

Queen Alexandra College, Birmingham

Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9TG

Telephone 0121 428 5050

Email info@qac.ac.uk

www.qac.ac.uk/

Royal National College for the Blind

Venns Lane, Hereford HR1 1DT

Telephone 01432 265 725

Email info@rnc.ac.uk

www.rnc.ac.uk

Equipment Suppliers

If you are registered as **Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted or Severely Sight Impaired/Blind** you may be entitled to receive some equipment VAT free. Check with the supplier direct when ordering.

Cobolt Systems

The Old Mill House, Mill Road, Reedham, Norwich Norfolk NR13 3TL
Telephone 01493 700172
Email sales@cobolt.co.uk
www.cobolt.co.uk/

Optima Low Vision Services Ltd

Dartside, Ford Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5LQ
Telephone 01803 864218
Email sales@optimalowvision.co.uk
www.optimalowvision.co.uk/

Partially Sighted Society

1 Bennetthorpe, Doncaster DN2 6AA
Telephone 01302 965195
Email reception@partsight.org.uk
www.partsight.org.uk/

RNIB

Northminster House, Northminster, Peterborough PE1 1YN
Telephone 0303 123 9999
Email helpline@rnib.org.uk
www.shop.rnib.org.uk/

SW Retail/IC-Online Ltd

PO Box 5982, Sheffield S35 5DR
Telephone 01226 762513
Email swretailtd@gmail.com
www.icswretail.co.uk/

Section 10:

Children & Families

The West Berkshire Council Sensory Needs Team work with children who are visually impaired, and their families too. As your child grows their needs and yours will change over time. We work closely with the child, parents, carers and other professionals involved in their care to tailor the support needs for the whole family.

Our aim is to try and ensure everyone has access to the best information, equipment and resources at all times. The earlier your child is known to our service, the sooner we can provide support, plus this has the added benefit of an easier transition into adulthood for the young person.

Certification and registration can also apply for children and young people. If their vision impairment has been assessed and diagnosed with a Consultant Ophthalmologist then they may discuss certification with you. For more information on this process, please see section 2 of this handbook. If your child has been certificated and been issued with a Certificate of Vision Impairment, then our team can offer registration through the West Berkshire Council Visual Impairment register, under Part 1, Schedule 2 of the Children Act 1989.

If you would like to have a chat with our team or want to refer a child to us (please gain permission from the parents/carers of the child or young person) then give us a call or send us an email today.

The following section provides a range of information about the various services and resources available for visually impaired children and their families.

West Berkshire Council Community Care
Sensory Needs Team
Turnhams Green Park
Pincents Lane
Tilehurst
RG31 4UH

Telephone 01635 503704
Email Sensoryneeds@westberks.gov.uk

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

The Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service is a specialist education support service for hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairment working jointly with all local authorities in Berkshire. They support, extend and enhance educational opportunities and achievements of children and young people from 0-19 years from diagnosis to entry into the workplace.

What they do –

- Deliver specialist assessments, teaching and advice to individual young people with sensory impairment
- Run joint Community Audiology Clinics and joint Community Ophthalmology Clinics

Pre-school

- Provide a home based education programme for pre-school children who have a diagnosed sensory impairment
- Provide Pre-School Groups with opportunities to meet families, specialists and children with sensory impairment

Statutory school age

- Provide assessment, training and support for children in local authority schools
- Contribute to individualised school education programmes, liaising with Health, Local Authorities and other professionals
- Deliver specialist training to mainstream and special school staff
- Provide specialist teacher support for planning provision and the placement and monitoring of pupils with a sensory impairment in schools
- Loan specialist equipment for pupils attending mainstream Local Authority school
- This school based service can be purchased by Independent schools

Jean Weiss, Qualified Teacher of the Vision Impaired: 07823 535146

Tim Kehoe, Teacher of the Multi-sensory Impaired: 07543 303366

Jane Peters, Head of Service: 07887 540921

Telephone 01628 796786

Email: sensory.consortium@achievingforchildren.org.uk

www.berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk

Berkshire Vision

An independent local charity whose Children and Family Support service aims to support children and young people from birth to 19 years. They also support families, including parents, siblings and anyone affected by sight loss.

- Children, Young People and Families programme supports visually impaired children across Berkshire as well as parents/carers and siblings.
- Activities designed to encourage development across all areas, build confidence and allow children to spend time with others in their position.
- Many sessions are delivered in partnership with key partners in the county including Berkshire Sensory Consortium and Guide Dogs, providing parents with information, advice and guidance whilst their children are taking part in activities.
- Children and Young People News magazine downloadable online.

Midleton House, 5 Erleigh Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5LR

Telephone 0118 987 2803

Email info@berkshirevision.org.uk

www.berkshirevision.org.uk/children-and-family-support/

Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs provide a range of services to support not only children with sight loss, but the whole family.

- Specialist Habilitation Service helping children develop a range of skills, with a focus on early movement, self-help practical skills and social and communication skills.
- My Time to Play Programme; developing skills through play in a group setting for children aged 0-4.
- CustomEyes large print children's books from Dr Seuss to Shakespeare.
- My Life Skills habilitation services to help children and young people reach their full potential. From mobility to independent living skills.
- Specialist Education Support Team.
- Buddy Dogs and guide dogs for young people.
- Family events and family support.

Hillfields, Reading Road, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire RG7 3YG

Telephone 0800 781 1444

Email information@guidedogs.org.uk

www.guidedogs.org.uk/services-we-provide/children-and-young-peoples-services/

Blind Parents UK

Supporting visually impaired mums and dads across the UK.

- One-to-one peer support for all phases of parenting
- Closed and safe Facebook groups:
www.facebook.com/groups/bpukmums (mums only)
www.facebook.com/groups/blindparentsuk (for all VI parents)
- One-to-one technical support sessions.
- Help with locating and choosing suitable equipment and other resources
- Support to find out what's available in your local area.
- Find-A-Parent: be linked up with someone nearby
- Frequent chat groups and WhatsApp groups

Telephone 01905 886252

Email info@blindparents.uk

www.blindparents.uk

Calibre Audio Library – Younger Readers

Young Calibre audio library is a national charity providing a subscription-free postal service of unabridged audio books for young people with sight problems, dyslexia or other disabilities, who cannot read print.

Calibre Audio Library, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5XQ

Telephone 01296 432 339

Email enquiries@calibre.org.uk

<https://play.calibreaudio.org.uk/youngbooks>

LOOK National Federation of Families with Visually Impaired Children

LOOK-UK supports young people and families living with a visual impairment.

- Mentoring project – become a mentor or find a mentor
- Events – organized throughout the year
- Helpline – providing advice, emotional support and information
- Education support – specialist and practical advice for educational services
- Accessible holiday – a specially adapted flat in Scarborough
- Parents and carers – advice and guidance

Queen Alexandra College, 49 Court Oak Road, Harbourne, Birmingham B17 9TG

Telephone 0121 428 5038

www.look-uk.org/

Retina UK

Providing advice and information on a range of issues such as explaining a diagnosis to a child, the impact on other children in the family, emotional support for parents and carers. Also resources for teachers and employers.

Telephone 0300 111 4000

Email helpline@RetinaUK.org.uk

www.retinauk.org.uk/information-support/children-and-young-people/

Royal Society for Blind Children

Supporting blind and partially sighted children and young people and their families. Services include emotional support and practical advice, building confidence and skills opportunities, and a specialist further education college.

- An online hub filled with content especially for blind and partially sighted young people, including podcasts, blogs and a forum.
- Their Families First Service has a nationwide team of qualified, fully experienced Family Practitioners.
- Support for families also through their Parents Network.

Orpington Campus, The Walnuts, High Street, Orpington, Kent BR6 0TE

Telephone 0203 198 0225

Email connections@rsbc.org.uk

www.rsbc.org.uk/

Sense

Extensive experience working with parents to help them understand the needs of their child and give them the skills and knowledge to support their child as they develop. Their specialist service is a team of specialist teachers and multi-sensory impaired practitioners offering a range of services such as –

- Help when a child is first diagnosed.
- Early intervention and developmental play.
- Support with the Education and Health Care Plan.
- Advice and support as your child's move into adulthood.
- Help to navigate the education, health and social care systems.
- Access to family and teenage events.

101 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LG

Telephone 0300 330 9256

Email info@sense.org.uk

www.sense.org.uk/get-support/support-for-children/

Thomas Pocklington Trust

Providing a range of support for children, their families, professionals and local organisations through advice and information on post-diagnosis to a FAQ portal covering topics on education, benefits and mobility; to service development support.

Email cypf@pocklington-trust.org.uk

www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/children-young-people-families/

TFH Special Needs Toys

Specialists in making sensory toys and special needs toy since 1983.

Unit 5-7, Severnside Business Park, Severn Road, Stourport-on-Severn,
Worcestershire DY13 9HT

Telephone 01299 827820

Email info@tfhuk.com

www.specialneedstoys.com/uk/

VICTA

Supports blind and partially sighted children, young people and their families, across the UK. If you are a parent of a blind or partially sighted child or young person or are visually impaired and under the age of 29 then VICTA can help.

- Activities designed to improve emotional, social and living skills of children and young people. Activities for a range of age groups including early years, families, 10-13 years, 14-17 years and 18-29 years.
- Grant applications can be made towards the purchase of specialist or adaptive equipment e.g. Braille, computers and magnification software.
- The Parent Network is an online portal designed to help parents and carers feel more confident, knowledgeable and less isolated.
- VICTA's national awards programme including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and John Muir Environmental Award.

5 Douglas House, 32-34 Simpson Road, Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes MK1
1BA

Telephone 01908 240831

Email admin@victa.org.uk

www.victa.org.uk/