Services for people with a visual impairment

If you are having difficulties with your sight, this guide can give you information about what help is available in Flintshire and how to get it.

This information is available in other formats, including larger print, Braille, on audiotape and CD Rom. Call Social Services for Adults on 01352 702642 for a copy.

May 2009
Copies are available on request in other formats including Braille, tape and large print. Please call 01352 702642.

Published by Flintshire County Council Social Services for Adults 01352 702642

Thanks to Rhondda Cynon Taf Social Services for their kind help in producing this guide.
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1. Diagnosing sight loss and the specialist workers you might meet

If you think you have a sight problem you should see your General Practitioner (GP, also known as a family doctor) or Optometrist (also known as an Ophthalmic Optician). If he or she thinks specialist advice or treatment is needed, you will be referred to an eye specialist (or Ophthalmologist). Ophthalmologists are often based in hospitals or eye clinics but other health service staff work both in the community and in hospital eye departments.

Before you see the specialist, you might like to prepare some questions you want to ask, such as:

- What is my condition called and will it get worse in the future?
- Will treatment make my sight better - or at least stop it getting worse?
- Would a low vision aid help?
- Who can I talk to if I have more questions at a later date?
- How might it affect me or my ability to look after myself and others?

If your sight changes or you have a sudden eye problem, it is very important to go back to your GP or Optometrist and ask for a new appointment with the eye specialist.

If you would like more information about the different eye conditions, RNIB provide simple guides on a range of conditions in their web site: www.rnib.org.uk

Hospitals offering Low Vision Services for people living in Flintshire:

People living in West Flintshire may be referred to HM Stanley Hospital in St Asaph.

People living in East Flintshire may be referred to either Countess Hospital in Chester or the Maelor Hospital in Wrexham.
If you have poor sight, you can expect to visit at least one of the following health workers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Worker</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optometrists / Ophthalmic Opticians</strong></td>
<td>usually work in high street practices / shops or hospital eye departments. They are qualified to test sight, prescribe glasses and detect eye conditions. They also refer you, if necessary, to your GP or directly to a hospital eye clinic. Optometrists are not qualified to treat or operate on people’s eyes, although they will often discuss your eye condition with you. They can also provide advice on eye care and may help with low vision aids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensing Opticians</strong></td>
<td>are qualified to fit and supply glasses, contact lenses and low vision aids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orthoptists</strong></td>
<td>usually work in hospital eye departments. They are qualified to identify and treat certain eye conditions such as squints or double vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ophthalmologists</strong></td>
<td>are specialist eye doctors who treat eye disorders and usually work in hospital eye departments or clinics (often called ophthalmology departments). They may prescribe glasses although they do not fit and supply them. They diagnose and treat eye defects and diseases through medications or surgery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ophthalmic Nurses</strong></td>
<td>receive special training in eye conditions and diseases on top of their general training.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You may also receive support from one or more of the following social care workers from the Council or voluntary sector:

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Rehabilitation Officers for People with a Visual Impairment (ROVI)</strong></th>
<th>Are specialist workers, qualified to carry out specialist assessments and provide a range of equipment, advice, instruction and support to help you make the most of your vision to cope with everyday living and maintain your independence safely. Unless you are under 18 (when social care services are free of charge) there may be charges for some of the equipment offered by the Rehabilitation Officers, but we will inform you about this so you won’t receive any unexpected bills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social workers (or care managers)</strong></td>
<td>Assess needs and help you to plan for yourself. They support people with special needs or disabilities and support the people caring for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Occupational Therapists</strong></td>
<td>Can help by looking at ways to overcome physical difficulties (possibly caused by your sight loss) you may be experiencing in and around your home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welfare Rights Advisors</strong></td>
<td>Give guidance about your entitlement to additional income from agencies like the Department for Work and Pensions. This service can be arranged through your social worker.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Working with partners to deliver services**

The National Health Service and Social Services will often work together to deliver services to people with visual impairments. To make this arrangement work effectively, they will seek your permission to share your personal details with each other, while keeping appropriate confidentiality to safeguard your rights. This arrangement will benefit you, as you won’t have to answer the same questions over and over again.
2. Making the most of your residual vision

Most people with a visual impairment will have some useful sight (residual vision). Using this residual vision will neither damage sight nor cause sight to deteriorate more quickly, but will help you maintain as much independence as possible.

Staff at Low Vision Clinics will be able to help you make best use of your remaining sight and can advise you about lighting and prescribe aids like magnifiers, for example, that can help improve your ability to see and read. Alternatively, the Council's Rehabilitation Officers for People with a Visual Impairment (ROVIs) are trained to help you to make the most of the sight you have left. They will support you to manage everyday living as independently and safely as possible.

In Flintshire the Rehabilitation Officers are supported by a Project Worker who brings and demonstrates equipment and helps you to use it.
3. Help with Everyday Living

Every day living includes all the routine things we do regularly, such as:

- looking after ourselves and others
- preparing and eating food
- doing housework
- reading and writing
- dealing with the mail
- getting around and about
- using the telephone
- shopping
- pursuing leisure activities
- finding or holding down a job or pursuing education or training

Many people who lose some sight may also lose confidence in their ability to run their home, prepare meals and maintain standards. You can be helped to regain your independence by changing the way you do things or by using new techniques or equipment. It is one of the roles of the Council’s Rehabilitation Officer for People with Visual Impairment to help you in your own home and out and about in your neighbourhood by discussing any particular problems you may be having and suggesting ways of overcoming them.

Flintshire Social Services have an Employment Officer who works with you to secure an existing job, find a new one or get support in college. Contact our Duty Team on 01352 702642 for more information.

Some people with a visual impairment who retain some useful vision (which cannot be improved by ordinary spectacles) can often improve their visual performance by using low vision equipment like special magnifying glasses or going through a process of rehabilitation. This equipment can be prescribed through the National Health Service (from both High Street optometrists and hospital eye clinics). They are also available commercially from chemists’ shops and even some supermarkets. You should ask for a low vision assessment at a Low Vision Clinic in order to obtain the correct types of magnifier suitable for specific tasks like reading, watching television or getting around outdoors. Low vision services are also available through many local societies and information on some specialised equipment can be found in free catalogues available from, amongst others, RNIB Cymru Telephone 029 2047 3954 (See also the A – Z section, starting on page 27).
4. Services and support for children and young people with a visual impairment

Children with a visual impairment are supported from birth, where necessary and can receive a variety of assistance and support from health, education, social services and the voluntary and private sectors. You can make an appointment for a low vision assessment with your nearest optometrist. The assessment will determine how well your child copes with activities in school and home and where difficulties lie. There will be a variety of low vision aids available for your child to try out. The assessment and any low technology low vision aids prescribed will be supplied free of charge. If your child has support from a specialist teacher (see below) you might choose to ask them to contribute information they may have to the assessment.

Finding out the full extent of what a child can see and arriving at a final diagnosis of their condition may take some time as complex language is required to describe exactly how the child’s eye condition affects their vision. As a parent or carer your observations are important in ensuring the success of professional help.

Education
You will want to know how your child’s sight loss might affect their learning and development and ensure that their educational needs are met. You don’t need to wait until your child starts school - the sooner you get advice and support, the better.

In addition, every school has the support of an educational psychologist who can offer assessment, advice and support to parents and teachers where there is a concern about the development, learning or behaviour of children and young people.

There are a number of self-help groups for parents of children with visual impairments listed at the end of this section. You may find it reassuring to contact one or more of these for the advice and support they can offer. The RNIB employ a Children’s Low Vision Advocate as part of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Welsh Low Vision Scheme (see section 9). She can be contacted on 01792 325309. In addition, the Visual Impairment Emotional Wellbeing Service provides emotional support for children with a visual impairment and their parents in Wales. For more information about this service, contact RNIB Cymru. Telephone 029 2044 9576; email helpline@rnib.org.uk; web site www.rnib.org.uk
Transition into adult life
From the age of 14, plans are drawn up (called Transitional Plans) that look at the youngster’s life through the rest of their school years up to the point of leaving school to pursue their adult life. These plans will include:

- what a young person is assessed as needing to become more independent and confident
- what practical help or adaptations may be needed at home
- what special health needs require continued support

A variety of people may be involved in the process:
- teachers and other school or Local Education Authority staff
- social workers
- health workers
- the Education Department’s Statementing Officer (see previous page)
- advocates and advisers
- peer support

A number of organisations will be involved too and these may include:

- The Education Department
- Social Services
- Health services
- Careers Wales – looks at further learning or employment opportunities
- The Welsh Assembly Government’s Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills – considers all aspects of further, higher and adult education as well as funding residential places in further education colleges

This ‘Transition’ phase in a child’s life can be a complicated and challenging time for parents and carers as well as the child. In Flintshire there is a ‘Transition Support Team’ who can support young people into work and college. Many organisations work together on behalf of the young person. More information about Transition is available from Social Services. Telephone 01352 702642 for details.

Some professionals who may be involved in your child’s development may include:

<p>| Children’s Low Vision | can provide information and |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocate (who works with RNIB Cymru)</th>
<th>guidance on issues concerning visual impairment affecting children and young people. Telephone 01792 325309</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational psychologist</td>
<td>offers assessment, advice and support to parents and teachers where there is a concern about the development, learning or behaviour of children and young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paediatrician</td>
<td>is a specialist in children’s health, accessed through your GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
<td>To help with movement and posture and accessed through your GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation Officer for the Visually Impaired</td>
<td>A specialist in managing visual impairment and can advise on equipment and techniques to help confidence and ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker / care manager</td>
<td>A member of the Social Work Team can assess your child’s needs and arrange appropriate services. Telephone 01352 702642 to make a referral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech therapist</td>
<td>To develop language and communication skills</td>
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</table>

Some useful support groups for parents and children are listed below:

**After 16** is a website for young people with disabilities who plan to go on to further or higher education or employment. [Website](http://www.after16.org.uk)

**Booktrust** provide materials for children with a visual impairment through its *Booktouch* scheme.
Telephone 020 8516 2995; website [www.bookstart.co.uk](http://www.bookstart.co.uk)

**Children’s Integrated Disability Service (CIDS)** provides services for children in Flintshire with moderate to severe learning or physical disability or profound sensory impairment. Telephone Helpline: 01244 538883.

**Clear Vision** is a lending library of tactile books for children
Telephone 020 8789 9575; website [www.clearvisionproject.org](http://www.clearvisionproject.org)

**Contact a Family** puts families in contact with national organisations for particular eye conditions. Telephone **0808 808 3555**;
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The Children’s Information Service can provide general information about early years and childcare provision in Flintshire.
Telephone 01244 547017; email cis@flintshire.gov.uk

The Children’s Low Vision Project is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government as part of the Wales Eye Care Initiative (see page 24). It aims to help more children with low vision to access the services provided by health, education, social services and the voluntary sector and covers the whole of Wales; website www.eyecarewales.nhs.uk

The Eyeless Trust offers professional support for families in Great Britain who have a child with anophthalmia, microphthalmia or coloboma who is under the age of 25, seeking to integrate the children into everyday life, to improve the quality of life of each child and to enable him or her to participate in as many as possible of the things that normal children enjoy.
PO Box 1248, Slough, SL2 3GJ
Website www.eyeless.org.uk

Look works to enhance the education, welfare and leisure of visually impaired children. Telephone 0121 428 5038; website www.look-uk.org

National Blind Children’s Society
Telephone 01278 764 764; website www.nbcs.org.uk

Parents of Visually Impaired Children is a web-based group for parents of visually impaired children. Their aim is to create a space to provide information, and to share support and ideas with other parents, visually impaired adults and other people interested in advocating for the needs of visually impaired children by supporting parents. Website www.geocities.com/lynseypvic

RNIB run vacation schemes for children 8 – 17 years
Telephone 0113 274 8855; email leisureservices@rnib.org.uk
and produce ‘Insight’ magazine that gives information on the education of children and young people, including those with additional or complex needs.
Telephone: 0845 702 3153; email: cservices@rnib.org.uk

SNAP Cymru provides information and support for parents of children with special educational needs
Telephone: 01443 220150; web site www.snapcymru.org
**Sure Start** supports early years children, their parents and carers
Telephone: 01443 424907; web site [www.surestart.gov.uk](http://www.surestart.gov.uk)

**Vision Aid** is a national organisation supporting visually impaired children, their families and professionals
106 Junction Road, Deane, Bolton, BL3 4NE.
Telephone 01204 64265; Fax 01204 855937
email enquires@visionaid.org.uk; website [www.visionaid.org.uk](http://www.visionaid.org.uk)
5. Registering as a blind or partially sighted person

If your sight is poor, in many instances, registering as blind (sometimes referred to as severely sight impaired) or partially sighted (sometimes referred to as sight impaired) makes it more likely that you will get the help and support you need. The Council is required to keep a register of people with a visual impairment; it helps to develop services and is used to involve people who use social services in the planning process. Registration as a ‘Blind’ person does not necessarily mean that you have no useful vision at all. Only a small percentage of people in this category have a complete loss of sight. Once registered, you will receive a card as proof of your registration.

Registration is voluntary but, by registering, you will qualify for some of the benefits and entitlements available. You can ask to have your name removed from the register at any time you wish. Receiving services from the Social Services is not dependent on your registration and you need not wait until you are registered to approach Social Services for support.

Getting registered
You can register as blind or partially sighted following an assessment by a Consultant Ophthalmologist (eye specialist) at your eye clinic. If you aren’t already attending an eye hospital, you can ask your GP or optometrist to refer you to a Consultant Ophthalmologist.

What passes for blind or partial sightedness?
The Consultant Ophthalmologist will use prescribed tests to determine if your eye condition warrants registration as blind or partially sighted. If you are eligible to register as blind or partially sighted after your eye tests, you will be asked to sign the certification form. It’s known as a CVI. By signing it, you are indicating that you understand it and give your consent to a copy being sent to your local Social Services Department and your GP. You can also contact the Rehabilitation Officer for People with Visual Impairment, in Social Services for advice.

After the Social Services Department has received the completed certification form (CVI) from the eye specialist, you will be contacted by the Rehabilitation Officer for People with a Visual Impairment, who will advise you on the services, concessions and benefits available. You may find it useful to talk to people who have been through similar experiences. You could meet people through a support group for people with particular eye conditions. Some contacts are given in the A – Z section later in the booklet.
Your rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
If you have been certified as blind or partially sighted by a consultant ophthalmologist, or if you are registered as blind or partially sighted with a local authority, you will automatically be regarded as disabled for the purposes of the Act. More information about the DDA is available at the web site: www.direct.gov.uk

Your rights under the Data Protection Act

Your concerns may be very personal. Anything you tell health or social care professionals will be treated in strict confidence, in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Your permission will be obtained before organisations working on your behalf share your personal information. Records of your meetings will be kept on file, which you have a right to see. Organisations holding personal information about you should be able to give you further details about the process of accessing the information they hold about you in your file. More information is available from the Information Commissioner’s web site: www.ico.gov.uk

The costs of services

Most National Health Services are delivered free. Prescription charges in Wales are free. Council services for anyone under 18 is free; for adults, there may be a charge. Some are fixed charges, others depend on your income and savings. The Council will discuss charges for services with you before anything is provided, so you will not receive any unexpected bills.
6. Entitlements and benefits available to people registered blind or partially sighted

Living with poor sight always involves extra costs; for example, you may need to use taxis instead of buses to make journeys.

Anyone who is registered as blind or partially sighted will not receive a pension or benefit automatically. You will have to apply for any payments you think you may be entitled to receive.

The way benefits are determined by the Department for Work and Pensions is complicated and there are frequent changes but these 3 simple rules may prove useful:

- The benefits system always places the onus on you to find out what you are entitled to, so it is useful to seek out expert advice
- Always inform the office paying your benefit of any changes in circumstances. This is especially important if you have become registered as blind or partially sighted
- Always keep copies of letters and notes of telephone calls you’ve had with staff, including times and dates

At the time of printing this guide, some of the entitlements and benefits include those listed below. The asterisk denotes a possible entitlement to the benefit if you are registered blind or partially sighted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit, concession or service</th>
<th>Registered Blind</th>
<th>Registered Partially sighted</th>
<th>Unregistered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blind person’s personal income tax allowance - you should apply to the local Tax Office - proof of registration will be required. It is not means tested. Contact: Inland Revenue Wales Executive Office 0845 300 3949</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loan of radios, cassette players and tv sound receivers. Contact: Wireless for the Blind Fund 01634 832501</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefit, concession or service</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tv licence fee reduction</strong> - if you are registered blind, you are entitled to a 50% annual reduction. TV licences are now free for everyone over 75 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact: <strong>Tv Licence Fee Helpline 0870 576 3763</strong> or visit their website <strong><a href="http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk">www.tvlicensing.co.uk</a></strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Work Scheme</strong> can supply special equipment, assistance at work (including a reader or driver) and help towards travel costs. Contact the local <strong>Jobcentre Plus</strong> or visit their website: <strong><a href="http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk">www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk</a></strong> or <strong>RNIB Cymru Employment Officer 029 2045 0440</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disability Living Allowance</strong> is money for help with mobility and personal care or supervision needs, available for people under 65 (including children and young people). It is not means tested. Contact: <strong>Benefit Enquiry Line 0800 882200 or Disability Benefits Centre Wales 029 2058 6002</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance Allowance</strong> is money for help with personal care or supervision needs for people over 65. It is not means tested. Contact: <strong>Benefit Enquiry Line 0800 882200 or Disability Benefits Centre Wales 029 2058 6002</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Carers Allowance</strong> may be payable to people who spend at least 35 hours a week caring for a person (including a child) who receives Disability Living Allowance (middle or high care component rate) or Attendance Allowance (any rate).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit, concession or service</td>
<td>Registered Blind</td>
<td>Registered Partially sighted</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incapacity Benefit</strong> is a payment for people who are incapable of work. Strict eligibility criteria apply. Contact: <strong>Benefit Enquiry Line 0800 882200</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incapacity Benefit for Youth</strong> helps over 16 year olds who are in education for less than 21 hours a week and who are incapable of work because of sickness or disability. There are exceptions that may make this benefit available for full-time students. <strong>Telephone 08456 013614</strong> for an application form.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You may be able to claim <strong>Industrial Injuries Benefit</strong> if you’ve lost your sight as a result of an injury or disease caused by the job. The benefit is dealt with by <strong>Jobcentre Plus</strong>. Amounts depend on the degree of disability.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disabled Students’ Allowance</strong> is available for students in higher education to meet the disability related costs of study (including specialist equipment and non-medical helpers). You will need to provide medical proof of your disability, such as a letter from your doctor or an appropriate specialist. Contact the <strong>Student Finance information line 0800 731 9133</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Income Support or Pension Credit</strong> may be available to people registered blind or claiming a disability benefit through additional payments. Contact: <strong>Benefit Enquiry Line 0800 882200</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Working Tax Credit (WTC)** is means tested and is for people over 16 who are working at least 16 hours a week and are in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit.  
Contact:  **WTC Helpline 0845 300 3900**  

**Pension Credit** is a means tested benefit for people over 60. It is dependent on certain types of income, capital, receipt of disability benefits, etc.  
Contact:  **Pension Credit Helpline 0800 99 1234**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Housing Benefit</strong> may be available to people who are registered blind or claiming a disability benefit like DLA or AA. Contact: Benefit Enquiry Line 0800 882200</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Council Tax Benefit.</strong> Being registered blind or partially sighted or claiming a disability benefit may entitle you to additional premiums. Contact: Benefit Enquiry Line 0800 882200</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A reduction of <strong>Council Tax</strong> under the Disability Reduction Scheme may be available if a room (or rooms) in the house is set aside for equipment, such as a Braille printer/computer.</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from ‘non-dependants’ deductions. You may be exempt, as a registered blind person, from the deductions normally taken from income based benefits where there are adult non-dependants living in your home. This exemption may be available for partially sighted people if you receive the care component of DLA or AA.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>(see text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There may be a few groups that could help with paying the bills if you’re in difficult financial circumstances. <strong>Action for Blind People</strong> (020 7635 4800), <strong>Cecilia Charitable Trust</strong> (020 7606 5711), <strong>Electronic Aids for the Blind</strong> (020 8295 3636), <strong>Gardener’s Trust for the Blind</strong> (020 7253 3757) and <strong>RNIB</strong> (0845 766 9999) are all approachable</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free NHS Sight Test</strong> is available for blind and partially sighted people (amongst others). Free Eye Health Examination is available for people at risk of developing eye disease. For both tests, contact your optometrist.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit, concession or service</td>
<td>Registered Blind</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help from your <strong>Social Services Department</strong> who will assess individual need for help in your home. Financial help may be available to help towards care home fees if living at home is no longer feasible. Contact: <strong>01352 702642</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low vision aids</strong>, such as magnifiers are available to people registered blind or partially sighted or those with a serious sight loss. Contact: <strong>your Optometrist or Social Services</strong></td>
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<td>If you are in receipt of the higher mobility component of DLA, you may not have to pay road tax if the vehicle is used solely for your purposes. Telephone the <strong>DLA Helpline (08457 123 456)</strong> and request a car tax exemption form.</td>
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<td><strong>A Disabled Person’s Railcard</strong> will entitle you to discounts off most ticket prices. You can get an application form at your local (staffed) station. <strong>Bus pass</strong> - the Council provides free bus passes to anyone over 60 years old and for people with physical disabilities (including sight loss). For all transport information, contact: <strong>Traveline Cymru 0870 608 2 608</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Free postage</strong> on certain items delivered by the Royal Mail. Various items marked ‘Articles for the Blind’ including Braille, spoken audiotape messages and guide dog harnesses can be sent free of charge, but not personal tapes or typed letters. Contact: <strong>Royal Mail Customer Services 08457 740 740</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefit, concession or service</td>
<td>Registered Blind</td>
<td>Registered Partially sighted</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BT 195</strong> is a free directory enquiry service for blind or disabled customers. Telephone <strong>0800 587 0195</strong> between 8.30am and 5pm on weekdays for more information and to register for the service. You don’t have to be a BT subscriber to use the service</td>
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<td><strong>Some gas and electricity companies</strong> will often mark the controls of domestic appliances to enable people with visual impairments to use them safely. Your supplier’s details will be on their bill. Some manufacturers will arrange to mark controls in Braille, for example. <strong>RNIB’s Customer Services Department</strong> can advise Telephone <strong>0845 702 3153</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cinema Exhibitors’ Association Card</strong> entitles visually impaired people to a two for the price of one cinema ticket. Telephone <strong>0151 348 8020</strong>; web site <strong><a href="http://www.ceacard.co.uk">www.ceacard.co.uk</a></strong></td>
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<td><strong>The Disability Discrimination Act</strong> was introduced to reduce discrimination against disabled people. If you feel you have been treated unfairly because of your visual impairment, the following organisations can offer advice: <strong>RNIB Helpline 0845 766 9999</strong> and Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline <strong>0845 762 2633</strong>; web site <strong><a href="http://www.equalityhumanrights.com">www.equalityhumanrights.com</a></strong></td>
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</table>
There may be other benefits, concessions and services available that have not been included in this list. You can get more information on your entitlements and benefits from the Council’s Welfare Rights Advisors, your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or your Rehabilitation Officer for People with a Visual Impairment. Alternatively, you may find the following web sites useful:

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk for working age benefits
www.thepensionservice.gov.uk for pension related information
www.dwp.gov.uk for other information
www.disabilityalliance.org is a useful source of information on benefits

Flintshire CAB:
Old Library, High St, Holywell, CH8 7LH. Telephone 01352 711262

The Annexe Terrig House, Chester Street, Mold, CH7 1EG. Telephone: 01352 753520 Fax: 01352 706821

Cable Street, Off Tuscan Way, Connah’s Quay, CH5 4DZ. Telephone: 01244 846700
7. Services for people with both sight and hearing loss

A severe impairment in both your sight and hearing may mean you have additional problems with communication, mobility and access to information. It is important to have regular hearing tests if your sight is poor.

Visually impaired people who wear an NHS hearing aid can be issued with a second aid for emergency use. Special equipment is available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. This includes television aids, loop systems, door warning systems, flashing smoke alarms and alarm clocks.

There are also aids to help with hearing and using the telephone. Information and advice about this equipment are available from the Social Services Duty Team on 01352 702642.

A special red and white cane or stick indicating that the user has both sight and hearing difficulties is available from your Rehabilitation Officer for People with a Visual Impairment. Various items of tactile equipment produced for people with both sight and hearing loss is also available from the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Deafblind UK is a national charity which provides a range of support services to deafblind adults and their carers. It also campaigns on behalf of deafblind people. Telephone 0800 132 320 (24 hour free helpline); web site www.deafblind.org.uk

Sense Cymru (National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association) is the UK’s largest organisation for children and adults who are deafblind or have associated disabilities. Services include one-to-one support, in depth assessments and statements of special educational needs. Training, consultancy and advice are also available. Telephone 029 2045 7641; Textphone 029 2046 4125; web site www.sense.org.uk
8. Support for Carers

Carers look after family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. The care they provide is unpaid, though they may get state benefits. Carers have a right to an assessment of their own needs by Social Services and may be offered services that meet these needs. There are grants available to help you to continue caring. The carer’s needs must also be taken into account when planning support for the cared for person. If you are under 18 years old, you are classed as a young carer. There are a number of local carers groups that offer support and help: 

**North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS)** - They produce a newsletter, help with local carers groups, run a telephone helpline and organise a variety of carers events. Telephone 01352 744055

**Carers Wales** – was established by people who carer for others and works to get a better deal for carers by providing a voice for them. Web site www.carerswales.org

**Barnardos Young Carers** project focus on the needs of young carers (under the age of 18) by providing training, individual emotional support, advocacy, time out from caring, awareness raising and a chance to be with other young people.

Hawarden Youth & Community Centre, Groomscroft, Hawarden, CH5 3EL
Telephone: 01244 539928
Fax: 01244 539495
Email: flintshire.youngcarers@barnardos.org.uk

**Social Services** Duty Team Telephone: 01352 702642.
Website: www.flintshire.gov.uk/careinfo
9. The Wales Eye Care Initiative

The Welsh Assembly Government is working to preserve sight through the early detection of eye disease and by supporting people with low vision through its Wales Eye Care Initiative. It aims to ensure equal access to local optical services for patients throughout Wales. The four main parts to the Initiative are:

- The Wales Eye Health Examination which offers a comprehensive eye examination to people who are vulnerable to eye disease because of family or racial reasons
- Screening for Diabetic Retinopathy which offers a service to everyone diagnosed with diabetes
- Low vision services in addition to existing clinics
- Children’s Low Vision Advocate (who works with RNIB Cymru)

More information about the Initiative is available from the Eye Care Wales web site: www.eyecarewales.nhs.uk
A – Z of services
for visually impaired people

Organisations and services listed in this section are not necessarily recommended by this guide. Readers should take the usual precautions when dealing with any of the agencies below:

A
Ability Net is a charity that advises on computers and I.T. and produces fact sheets about adaptive I.T. They offer an assessment service for suitable equipment to meet your needs. Telephone 0800 269 545; email enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk; website www.abilitynet.org.uk

Action for Blind People enables blind and partially sighted people to transform their lives through work, housing, leisure and support. 14-16 Verney Road, London, SE16 3DZ. Telephone Freephone Helpline 0800 915 4666; website www.afbp.org

Advocacy:
Advocacy is the process by which your voice can be heard. If you need support in speaking out for yourself, you can get free, independent and confidential help through the following local schemes:
Children’s Low Vision Advocate is based at RNIB Cymru, Disability Action Centre, The Courtyard, D’Arcy Business Park, Neath SA10 6EJ. Telephone 01792 32 53 09 Fax 01792 325380; Mobile 07718 733234, email jennifer.gray@rnib.org.uk
RNIB Advocacy Service – helps people to set up support services to maintain their independence. Telephone 0845 702 3153
Sense Cymru – provides an advocacy service for deafblind people. Telephone 029 2045 7641

Albinism Fellowship is a group that provides information, advice and support for people with albinism P.O. Box 77, Burnley BB11 5GN
Telephone 01282 771900; email info@albinism.org.uk; website www.albinism.org.uk

AMD Alliance International works to bring knowledge, help and hope to individuals and families around the world affected by age-related macular degeneration
Website www.amdalliance.org

Audio Descriptions – audio description is a verbal commentary on scenery, facial expression, body language and action between the spoken words. At the moment, only 10 hours of broadcasting is audio described available on Freeview and Sky (accessed through the menu on digital televisions). Audio descriptions are available on some DVDs and RNIB’s home video service (contact RNIB Customer Services 0845 702 3153).
Some theatres and cinemas offer audio description. For example, *Vocaleyes* is a national audio-description company, offering tape descriptions of various London shows in the West End.

**Telephone 0870 902 0002.**

B

**Benefits, entitlements and concessions** (see p 16)

**Big print** is a large print weekly newspaper, compiled by RNIB (available only on subscription). Apply on **0800 12 40 07** or by email *bigprint@rnib.org.uk*; website [www.big-print.co.uk](http://www.big-print.co.uk)

**Blind Business Association Charitable Trust** provides a free support service for blind and partially sighted people starting up or running their own business.

**Telephone 08540 450696; email info@bbact.org.uk; website [www.bbact.org.uk](http://www.bbact.org.uk)**

**Braille** (see Reading by Touch)

**British Blind Sport** is a charity co-ordinating sport for the blind and partially sighted

4-6 Victoria Terrace, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV31 3AB.

**Telephone 01926 424247; Fax 01926 427775; email info@britishblindsport.org.uk; website [www.britishblindsport.org.uk](http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk)**

**British Computer Association of the Blind**, BCAB, is a self-help group of visually impaired computer professionals and users. It runs training courses for visually impaired people and the website includes details of forthcoming courses.

**Telephone 0845 430 8627; website [www.bcab.org.uk](http://www.bcab.org.uk)**

**British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society** is a self help group which seeks to help its members live with and overcome their visual problems and to bring relief by stimulating research into the causes and eventually the treatment of RP

PO Box 350, Buckingham, MK18 5EL.

**Telephone 0845 123 2354; Fax 01280 815900; website [www.brps.org.uk](http://www.brps.org.uk)**

**The British Wireless for the Blind Fund** supplies a choice of high quality, easy to use audio equipment on free permanent loan for life to registered blind and registered partially sighted people living in the UK who are over the age of eight and in need.

Gabriel House, 34 New Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4QR

**Telephone 01634 832501; Fax 01634 817485; e mail info@blind.org.uk; website [www.blind.org.uk](http://www.blind.org.uk)**

C

**Calibre** is a lending library of adult and child fiction and non-fiction, recorded onto standard cassettes and delivered through a free nationwide postal service. A doctor’s certificate or letter from your **Rehabilitation**
Officer for People with a Visual Impairment stating that you are unable to read printed books is required. There is an initial charge for the catalogue. A full list of available tapes is on their website Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP22 5XQ. Telephone 01296 432 339; Fax 01296 392 599; email enquiries@calibre.org.uk; website www.calibre.org.uk

Careers (see Employment and Training)
Carelink is the Council’s community alarm that will alert the 24 hour monitoring service to any difficulties that a subscriber is experiencing in their home by way of a radio trigger that works through their telephone. Telephone 01352 762898

Carers (see Support for Carers page 25)
Childhood Eye Cancer Trust (formerly the Retinoblastoma Society)
The Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, London E1 1BB Telephone 020 7377 5578; Fax 020 7377 0740; email info@chect.org.uk; website www.chect.org.uk

Children and young people’s groups
There are a number of organisations that work on behalf of younger people with visual impairments and their families (see Section 4 (pages 10 – 14) also Childhood Eye Cancer Trust, Children in Wales, Contact a Family Wales, Council for Disabled Children, Cue and Review, Education, Family Fund Trust, Learning Support Service, LOOK, National Blind Children’s Society, National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries, SNAP)

Children in Wales is an organisation that aims to promote the interests of and take action to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and their families in Wales. For example, they work to support members in developing services to help meet the needs of disabled children in Wales. They work in partnership with the National Children’s Bureau and Children in Scotland.
25 Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ Telephone 029 2034 2434; fax 029 2034 3134; email info@childreninwales.org.uk; website www.childreninwales.org.uk

Computers (see Information Technology)
Contact a Family Wales works to support families caring for children with any disability or special need.
The Coal Exchange, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5EB

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Contrast can play an important part in helping you to use your remaining sight more effectively. This can be achieved by using:

- different, contrasting colours to make things stand out more
- different textures both underfoot and within reach, which will help you to identify where you are

If you would like further information about improving lighting and contrast to help you use your sight more effectively, contact your **Rehabilitation Officer for People with Visual Impairment**. Telephone 01443 431513

The **Council for Disabled Children** provides a national forum for the discussion and development of a wide range of policy and practice issues relating to service provision and support for disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs.

Telephone 020 7843 1901 (10am – 3pm Monday to Friday)

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy holds lists of counsellors registered with them.

BHCP House, St. John’s Business Park, Lutterworth LE17 4HB

**Telephone 0870 443 5252; fax 0870 443 5161; website www.bacp.co.uk**

**Cue and Review** is an independently funded talking newspaper group, transcribing magazines and newspapers into audio formats, especially for young people.

18 Crowhill Road, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow, G64 4QY.

Telephone 0141 563 0306; Fax: 0141 563 0308;
website [www.cueandreview.co.uk](http://www.cueandreview.co.uk)

**Deafblind UK (DBUK)** is a national charity which provides a range of support services to deafblind adults and their carers. It also campaigns on behalf of deafblind people. National Centre for Deafblindness

John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

Telephone 0800 132 320 (24 hour free helpline);
email info@deafblind.org.uk; website [www.deafblind.org.uk](http://www.deafblind.org.uk)

**Diabetes UK Cymru** is the largest organisation in the UK working for people with diabetes, funding research, campaigning and helping people live with the condition.

Argyle House, Castlebridge, Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff CF11 9AB

Telephone 029 2066 8276; fax 029 2066 8329;
email wales@diabetes.org.uk; website www.diabetes.org.uk

Directgov is a government website providing information on disability issues including independent living, employment, financial support and your rights.
Website www.direct.gov.uk/disability/

Direct Payments are cash payments in lieu of community care services, giving people the opportunity to organise their own personal care rather than rely on the Council delivering services directly. Direct Payments are available to people over 16 years old and to parents and carers. Contact Social Services for information on 01352 702642.

Directory Enquiries BT offers a free directory enquiry service for blind or disabled customers. Telephone 0800 587 0195 between 8.30am and 5pm on weekdays for more information and to register for the service. You don’t have to be a BT subscriber to use the service.

Disability Alliance publish the Disability Rights Handbook which gives information on social security benefits for disabled people.
Universal House, 88 – 94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA
website www.disabilityalliance.org

Disability Employment Adviser (see Employment and Training)

Disability Sports Development Officer provides advice for individuals and clubs on opportunities for disability sport within Flintshire.
Telephone 01352 702480

Education:
RNIB Vocational College provides post 16 training and education at Loughborough
Telephone 01509 611 077; website www.rnib.org.uk
RNIB offers a free cassette tape service of non-fiction, mainly for students or anyone wishing to study a particular subject. Contact Customer Services, PO Box 173, Peterborough, Cambs PE2 6WS Telephone 08457 023 153
See also Royal National College for the Blind and Services and Support for children and young people with a visual impairment (page 9)

Employment and Training:
If you are of employable age and are registered as having a visual impairment, the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at the local Jobcentre Plus will be able to advise you about job opportunities and the help available to support people with visual impairments in employment.
The Access to Work service, which is funded by the Department of Employment, operates through the network of Jobcentres and Placement, Assessment and Counselling Teams (PACTs). The scheme can help to
pay towards special equipment and alterations, the cost of getting to work and the cost of a support worker in the work place.

**Website** [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

If you are interested in self-employment, a number of organisations may be useful:

**See Blind Business Association Charitable Trust, The Prince’s Use Business Trust and PICKUP**

**Employment and benefits advice from the Department for Work and Pensions**

Promotes opportunity and independence for all, helps individuals achieve their potential through employment and works to end poverty in all its forms.

**Website** [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

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**Jobcentre Plus**

Swan Street, Flint, CH6 5BP.
Telephone: 01352 896400 Textphone: 0845 603 9134

St David’s Lane, Mold, CH7 1LH.
Telephone: 01352 894400 Textphone: 0845 603 9134

Civic Centre, Wepre Drive, Connah’s Quay, CH5 4HA.
Telephone: 01244 583700 Textphone: 0845 603 9134

**Website** [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

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**Equipment** see Suppliers of specialist equipment

**Eye Care Trust** was set up to act as an independent source of information on all eye-related issues

P.O. Box 131, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, LN8 5TS.
Telephone 0845 129 5001; Fax 0845 129 5002;
email info@eye-care.org.uk; Website [www.eye-care.org.uk](http://www.eye-care.org.uk)

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**Family Fund Trust** provides timely grants to families with severely disabled or seriously ill children, based on families’ views and needs.

Unit 4, Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, Huntington, York YO32 9WN
Telephone 0845 130 4542; email info@familyfund.org.uk;
Website [www.familyfundtrust.org.uk](http://www.familyfundtrust.org.uk)

**The Federation of Disability Sport Wales** is a development agency formed to increase participation in sport for disabled people and to support emerging and elite disabled athletes.

Welsh Institute of Sport, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff CF11 9SW
Telephone / Fax 029 2066 5781; email office@fdsw.org.uk;
Website [www.fdsw.org.uk](http://www.fdsw.org.uk)

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**Getting Around** see Mobility
[International] Glaucoma Association provides comprehensive patient information on all aspects of the detection and management of the condition. 
Woodcote House, 15 Highpoint Business Village, Henwood, Ashford, Kent TN24 8DH Telephone 0870 609 1870; email info@iga.org.uk; website www.iga.org.uk

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association will consider any visually impaired person over 16, who is resident in the UK and has mobility difficulties for training. Successful applicants are taught how to handle, care for, and understand their guide dogs. Where applicable, a small weekly charge is made for accommodation and a token payment is made for the dog. The association offers a feeding allowance to all guide dog owners.
Cheshire and North Wales District Team,
Units 2&3, Meres Edge,
Chester road,
Helsby WA1 0DJ
Telephone 08454 500415 website www.guidedogs.org.uk
Rehabilitation Officers for People with Visual Impairment (telephone 01352 702642) can advise about guide dog training.

H
Health services from NHS:

Health of Wales Information Service has a searchable directory of health services in Wales, including lists of optometrists.
Website www.wales.nhs.uk
NHS Direct provides a 24 hour a day health advice and information service.
Telephone 0845 46 47; website www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

North Wales NHS Trust meets the physical and mental health care needs of the people in North Wales through a range of primary / community health, specialist and acute hospital services. These include Wrecsam Maelor, Bodelwyddan, Mold, Holywell, Deeside and Flint hospitals.
PO Box 18, Wrexham, LL13 7ZH.
Telephone 01978 291100 E-mail mail@cd-tr.wales.nhs.uk
Website www.north-tr.wales.nhs.uk

Flintshire Local Health Board commissions NHS health care services in Flintshire. The board is due to be replaced in October 2009 with a new regional organisation.
Preswylfa, Hendy Road, Mold, Flintshire, CH7 1PZ
Tel: 01352 803434 Fax: 01352 755006
E-mail Address: flintshire.lhb@flintshirelhb.wales.nhs.uk

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Housing issues
Care and Repair is a home improvement agency that assists homeowners to remain in their own homes in comfort and security by coordinating repairs and adaptations funded privately by charitable sources or through local authority grant aid. Tel 01352 758700  Fax 01352 750600  E-mail: Enquiries@flintshirecr.com  Website www.careandrepair.org.uk/flintshire

For more information on housing issues, including Council grants to make your home more accessible, contact Flintshire County Council Housing Service at Council Offices, Chapel Street, Flint, CH6 5WS.  Telephone 01352 732532

Holidays and travel:
There are a number of hotels which cater for the needs of visually impaired people in England and Wales as well as sources of information for the disabled holiday maker.
Livability (formerly called John Grooms) run self catering holiday homes and hotels for people with disabilities. These include the West Shore Hotel in Llandudno. Telephone 01492 876833  E-mail holidays@livability.org.uk  Website www.livability.org.uk

The Royal National Institute for the Blind run accessible seaside hotels in Eastbourne and Blackpool.  Families, friends and guide dogs are welcome.  RNIB Holiday Service can provide information about accessible holiday accommodation.  Helpline 0845 766 9999; website www.rnib.org.uk/leisure

Tourism for All gives up-to-date information about holidays and respite care for people with disabilities all over the UK.  Telephone 0845 124 9971; Fax 0845 124 9972;  e-mail info@tourismforall.org.uk; web site www.tourismforall.org.uk

Royal Blind Society works to relieve people who are blind or partially sighted and in charitable need by giving cash grants to provide essential support for those on low incomes and by providing a range of holidays and leisure opportunities.
Vitalise (formerly the Winged Fellowship Trust) runs holidays for visually impaired people which include touring, education and activity holidays in Britain and abroad.
Shap Road Industrial Estate, Shap Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 6NZ
Telephone 0845 330 0149; web site www.vitalise.org.uk

See also Action for Blind People enables blind and partially sighted people to transform their lives through work, housing, leisure and support.
14-16 Verney Road, London, SE16 3DZ.
Telephone 0207 635 4800; Fax 0207 635 4900; website www.afbp.org

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) has produced a guide for disabled travellers, outlining what help should be provided to them at airports and during their flight. The guide can be downloaded from the DPTAC website which also contains useful information on many aspects of travel for disabled people.
Telephone 020 7944 8011; email dptac@dft.gsi.gov.uk; website www.dptac.gov.uk.

International Glaucoma Association operates a daily helpline, provides information sheets
Woodcote House, 15 Highpoint Business Village, Henwood, Ashford, Kent TN24 8DH
Telephone Sightline 0870 609 1870; Fax. 01233 648179; email info@iga.org.uk; website www.glaucoma-association.com

Information Technology
Developments in computers and electronic systems have improved communications for people with visual impairments in recent years.
Some services include:
See Ability Net, Audio Descriptions, Carelink, Dolphin, Education, Electronic Aids for the Blind, Reading using magnification, Screen readers, Telecare

Jobcentre Plus (see Employment and Training)
Keys for public toilets for the disabled – RADAR provide this facility for a small charge (see Radar’s entry). Flintshire residents can apply for a free key from the council. Telephone 01352 703350

L
Large Print the Big Print Newspaper provides weekly national and international news in large print with a TV guide. Available on subscription from www.rnib.org.uk

Leisure: Losing some or all of your sight may also affect your leisure time activities and social life. Wherever possible you should try to continue to enjoy your free time as you did before you lost some of your sight. To do this may mean changing methods of doing things, developing new interests etc. There are a number of clubs and organisations specifically for people with a visual impairment but it is possible (and, perhaps, advisable) to continue to mix with ‘sighted’ groups in your area. Your Rehabilitation Officer for People with a Visual Impairment will be happy to discuss problems and direct you to new interests.

RNIB Recreation and Lifestyles aims to ensure that blind and partially sighted people have equal access to all recreation and leisure facilities, service information and events. They produce publications about visually impaired people doing a variety of pass-times. Contact their helpline 08457 669 999

See also National Association of Toy & Leisure Libraries

Libraries - Your local library should have a range of recorded material and large print books and music on CD. There is no charge for hiring books on cassette and CD or music for people with a visual impairment.

Lighting
Depending on your particular eye condition, you may be able to use your remaining sight more efficiently in correct lighting conditions. Some people with a visual impairment will function more effectively when extra lighting is used. Others will prefer a lower degree of illumination. Lighting levels are therefore an individual choice, but experimenting with different lighting will help you to find the best arrangement for yourself.

Listening Books provides a postal audio book library service to anyone with an illness or disability that makes it impossible or difficult to hold a
book, turn pages, or read in the usual way. They provide audio books for both pleasure and learning.
12 Lant Street, London SE1 1QH
Telephone 020 7407 9417; Fax 020 7403 1377;
website www.listening-books.org.uk

**Living Paintings Trust** manufactures and distributes through a free library service a variety of touch and sound packs which explain pictures to blind and partially sighted people.
Queen Isabelle House, Unit 8 Kingsclere Park, Kingsclere, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 4SW
Telephone 01635 299771; Fax 01635 299771;
website www.livingpaintings.org

**LOOK** (National Federation of Families with Visually Impaired Children) a directory of UK health, disease, illness and related medical websites
Queen Alexandra College, 49 Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9TG.
Telephone 0121 428 5038; Fax 0121 427 9800; website www.look-uk.org

**Low Vision Clinics** advise on and provide specialist equipment to overcome sight loss

**M**

**Macular Disease Society** is a support group for patients with macular disease, offering a confidential telephone counselling service.
PO Box 1870 Andover, Kent SP10 9AD
Telephone 0845 241 2041; email info@maculardisease.org;
website www.maculardisease.org

**Mobility:**
Most people who lose some of their sight will encounter mobility problems. Mobility can range from moving around indoors to walking independently and safely outside.

Depending on your needs and capabilities, a **Rehabilitation Officer for People with Visual Impairment** can offer training to develop your mobility skills and enable you to travel safely and independently, thus helping to improve your self-confidence. These can include being guided safely by a partner or learning techniques which will increase your safety in your own home. He / she may train you how to use a long-cane which can help you travel independently in your local area and also further afield.

If you are reasonably fit and would like to go out by yourself regularly, you can apply to the **Guide Dogs for the Blind Association** for a guide dog. If
your application is accepted, you will be trained to use your dog safely and successfully at one of the Association’s residential centres (occasionally, you may be able to train and stay at home while you are doing so). Telephone 029 2083 9100 website www.gdba.org.uk

See Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and Community transport

**Moorfields Eye Hospital** has a website that includes information on eyecare and ‘Moorfields Direct’ - a patient information helpline, staffed by experienced ophthalmic nurses. Telephone 020 7253 3411; website www.moorfields.org.uk

**MS Society** provides support for people living with Multiple Sclerosis. Wales Branch, Temple Court, Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9HA Telephone 0808 800 8000; email through the website www.mssociety.org.uk

N

**National Association of Local Societies for Visually impaired People** promotes and supports the work of the UK network of independent local societies for blind and partially sighted people. PO Box 823, Doncaster, DN1 9AQ Telephone 01302 571 888; website www.nalsvi.org

**National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries** Toy libraries help children develop through play and toy loan; leisure libraries support accessible leisure activities for adults with special needs Steeple House, Steeple Lane, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7DJ Telephone 01874 622 097, Fax 01874 623 268; email natll.wales@playmatters.co.uk; website www.natll.org.uk

**National Blind Children’s Society** supports children and young people with a visual impairment, their families and those professionals who support them Bradbury House, Market Street, High Bridge, Somerset TA9 3BW. Telephone 0800 2791 555; Fax 01278 764790; email enquiries@nbcs.org.uk; website www.nbcs.org.uk

**National Centre for Deaf Blindness** is the association of deafblind and dual sensory impaired people in the UK John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD Telephone 24 hour Helpline 0800 132 320 (voice or text); email through the website www.deafblind.org.uk
National Federation of the Blind is an organisation of people who are blind or partially sighted, they are uniquely qualified to campaign for better service provision and an enhanced quality of life for all blind and partially sighted people.
215 Kirkgate, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 1ER.
Telephone 01924 291313; Fax 01924 200244; website www.nfbuk.org

National Library for the Blind provides a gateway to library and information services for visually impaired people and produces a quarterly magazine ‘Read On.’
Far Cromwell Road, Bredbury, Stockport, SK6 2SG.
Telephone 0161 355 2000; Fax 0161 355 2098; minicom 0161 355 2043; email enquiries@nlbuk.org website: www.nlbuk.org

New Beacon is a monthly magazine providing information on all aspects of living with a sight problem.
Enquiries to RNIB Customer Services, PO Box 173, Peterborough, PE2 6WS.
Telephone 0845 7023153; Fax 01733 371555

Nystagmus Network provides information including personal experiences, facts and the scientific details about nystagmus. The website is designed for parents, friends, family and teachers who are interested in finding out about nystagmus.
13 Tinsley Close, Claypole, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 5BS.
 Telephone Helpline 0845 634 2630; email webmaster@nystagmous.co.uk; website www.nystagmus.co.uk

Opsis – (the national association for the education, training and support of blind and partially sighted people) is a group of seven independent charities who work together to enhance the lives of visually impaired people, including providing information for the visually impaired, their carers and professionals via their website.
c/o Queen Alexandra College, 49 Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9TG
Telephone 0121 428 5037; Fax 0121 428 5048
Outside Clinic offers a home visiting optician service in the United Kingdom for people who find it difficult to get to a High Street optician. 7 Wood Street, Old Town, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 4AN. Advice Line 0500 295245; Fax 01793 534848; email info@outsideclinic.com; website www.outsideclinic.com

Parents of Visually Impaired Children is a web-based group for parents of visually impaired children. Their aim is to create a space to provide information, and to share support and ideas with other parents, visually impaired adults and other people interested in advocating for the needs of visually impaired children by supporting parents. Website www.geocities.com/lynseypvic

Partially Sighted Society is an organisation which provides support and advice on special aids and training to allow those with major sight loss to make some use of their sight to help them read a little, get about safely and be independent, including people who have developed a visual impairment recently. Queen’s Road, Doncaster DN1 2NX. Telephone: 01302 323132 Website www.partsight.org.uk

Patient UK review health and illness related websites and link to many of these from the web directory included on this website. Their home page is www.patient.co.uk. The following web address takes you to their ‘Blindness / Visual / Eye problems page: www.patient.co.uk/display/16777318

PICKUP (Professional, Industrial and Commercial Updating) is a training service aimed at employed and self-employed visually impaired people who want to update their skills and knowledge. It is run by the Royal National College for the Blind. Telephone 01432 265725

Playback Recording Service for Blind is a comprehensive recording service providing newspapers, magazines, a reading service and a tape library. The Playback Service will record anything requested for an individual or organisation if it is not available from another source, and copyright clearance has been given. The service sends out over 40,000 tapes each month with 20 regular publications. Centre for Sensory Impaired, 17 Gullane Street, Partick, Glasgow G11 6AH Telephone 0141 334 2983; Fax 0141 334 2983; website www.playback.com
RADAR works to enable disabled people and disability organisations to initiate, develop and encourage change and campaign for a fully inclusive society. They administer the National Key Scheme which offers independent access to disabled people to 7,000 locked public toilets around the UK.

12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London, EC1V 8AF.
Telephone 020 7250 3222; Fax 020 7250 0212; Minicom 020 7250 4119; email radar@radar.org.uk; website www.radar.org.uk

Radios
If you are over 8 years of age, registered blind, and not in a position to purchase one, a radio or radio cassette or radio cassette / cd player can be provided by the British Wireless for the Blind Fund on permanent loan. These can be obtained through your Rehabilitation Officer for People with a Visual Impairment. There is a weekly radio programme called “In Touch” as well as other programmes broadcast by local radio stations which are of special interest to visually impaired people.

British Wireless for the Blind Fund, 34 New Road, Catham, Kent ME4 4QR
Telephone 01634 832501; Fax 01634 817485; email info@blind.org.uk; website www.blind.org.uk

Reading - large print
Some people with a visual impairment may find they are still able to read ordinary size print using low vision equipment and improved lighting. Others may find they can read large print books, which are available from local libraries. The Partially Sighted Society will provide large print material on request. Website: www.partsight.org.uk

(See Helpful Organisations section on page 9). These include knitting patterns, recipes, maps etc. Other material available in large print includes:

- Telephone bills
- Gas bills
- Electricity bills
- Water bills (apply to individual supplier)
- Bank statements from most major banks and building societies
- “Big print”, a large print weekly newspaper, compiled by RNIB (available only on subscription - apply on 0800 12 40 07 or by email bigprint@rnib.org.uk)
- Various dictionaries, religious publications, books and magazines

Reading using magnification
Closed circuit televisions (CCTVs) can magnify the pages of a book onto a screen. There are also portable reading aids, which tune into a spare
channel on any TV set. They are useful for reading books, packets, telephone directories and so on. Low vision equipment (magnifiers) may also make reading easier.

**Reading by touch**
If you have difficulty with reading, there are two systems of learning to read with your fingers. One system is called Braille, and the other, Moon. **The Rehabilitation Officer for People with Visual Impairment** is trained to teach both these systems within your own home. Age is not a barrier, as long as you are keen to learn. Books, magazines, newspapers and knitting patterns are all available in Braille or Moon from the [RNIB](https://www.rnib.org.uk) (see Useful Addresses section on page 10). Lots of organisations (like the utility and telephone companies and banks) will send you communications in Braille if you ask them.

See also Royal Blind Retinoblastoma Society has changed its name to the **Childhood Eye Cancer Trust**
Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, London E1 1BB
Telephone 020 7377 5578; Fax 020 7377 0740; email info@chect.org.uk; website www.chect.org.uk

[**RNIB Cymru**](https://www.rnib.org.uk) delivers a wide range of services, providing practical solutions to everyday challenges.
Telephone 029 2045 0440; fax 029 2044 9550; website: www.rnib.org.uk

[**Royal Blind (formerly the Scottish Braille Press)**](https://www.royalblind.org) is a leading provider of high quality alternative formats such as Braille, Large Print and Audio
Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh, EH16 5NB.
Telephone 0131 662 4445; Fax 0131 662 1968;
email enquiries.sbp@royalblind.org; website www.royalblind.org

[**Royal National College for the Blind (RNC)**](https://www.rncb.ac.uk) is a specialist residential College of further education and training, working with people from the age of 16, who are blind or partially sighted, to promote their independence and potential. RNC provides a range of full time programmes and short courses designed to prepare people for progression to Further Education, High Education and the world of work.
College Road, Hereford HR1 1EB
Telephone 01432 265725; Fax 01432 376628; website www.rncb.ac.uk

[**Royal National Institute for the Blind (R.N.I.B)**](https://www.rnib.org.uk) is a national UK charity providing a range of information for blind or partially sighted people
224 Great Portland Street, London, W1N 6AA
Screen magnifiers can be used by people with some residual vision to make reading text on the computer screen easier. More information is available at the Screen Magnifiers Home Page at www.magnifiers.org

Screen readers
With so much information available on the internet these days and services like shopping on line for most things, accessing web sites is becoming very important. If you cannot read the website directly using the usual magnifying facilities, adjusting text size or contrast, you might benefit from a variety of screen reader software that can be fitted on your computer and will identify what is being displayed on the screen. This is then presented as speech to the user.

There are a few screen reader companies and they all provide demonstration versions.

Hal is a screen reader with Speech and Braille support from Dolphin Computers – 0845 130 5353; email info@dolphin.co.uk; website www.dolphin.co.uk

Jaws for Windows is from Freedom Scientific (based in Florida) – website www.freedomscientific.com

Lookout from Screen Reader – 01733 234441; email info@screenreader.co.uk; website www.screenreader.co.uk

OutSpoken from Vision Cue, email at.info@visioncue.com; website www.visioncue.com

Home Page Reader from IBM website www.ibm.com

Simply Talker from Econonet website www.econointl.com

Window-Eyes from G W Micro website www.gwmicro.com

WinVision from Artic Technologies website www.artictech.com

Using other senses
As your vision deteriorates, you may find that you will come to rely more on your other senses, particularly hearing. It is not that hearing improves, but
that you become more aware of sounds around you. If you have additional problems with your hearing it is important that you seek advice from your doctor.

**Sense Cymru (National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association)** Sense is the UK’s largest organisation for children and adults who are deafblind or have associated disabilities
5 Raleigh Walk, Brigantine Place, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4LN
Telephone 029 2045 7641; Textphone 029 2046 4125;
email cymruenquiries@sense.org.uk; website www.sense.org.uk

**Skill** is a national bureau for students with disabilities and promotes equality in education, training and employment for disabled people.
**Telephone 0800 328 5050; Textphone 0800 068 2422; email info@skill.org.uk; website www.skill.org.uk or**

**Skill Wales**, Students’ Services Department, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd CF37 1DL
Telephone 01443 654317; fax 01443 482084; email rpass@glam.ac.uk;

**SNAP Cymru** offers independent impartial information advice and support on special educational needs / disability training to individuals and groups.
Telephone 01443 220150, email morgannwg@snapcymru.org,
website www.snapcymru.org

**Social Services** have specialist workers (including Rehabilitation Officers for People with a Visual Impairment) who have the experience and training to help people of all ages with a sensory loss by advising you on ways to meet your individual needs. You would have to speak to our Duty team in County Hall to make an initial referral. Telephone: 01352 702642
There is an Emergency Duty Team to provide an out-of-hours service for any social services matter that cannot wait until the next working day.
Telephone **0845 0533116** (evenings, weekends and bank holidays only)

**Soundaround** is a monthly 100-minute cassette magazine-type programme available free to visually handicapped people.
74 Glentham Road, Barnes, London SW13 9JJ
Telephone **0800 917 6008 / 020 8741 3332**; website
[www.soundaround.org](http://www.soundaround.org)

**Soundings** record a monthly disk or tape reporting on new equipment and suppliers and general topics of interest.
Telephone 08457 258 852; email info@soundings.org;
web site [www.soundings.org](http://www.soundings.org)
Sport the Wales Council for the Blind (Sport and Leisure Development Project) aims to increase access to sporting and recreational activities for visually impaired people and to encourage and facilitate their participation in more sporting and recreational events in Wales. Telephone 029 2047 3954; website www.wcb-ccd.org.uk

See also British Blind Sport, Disability Sports Development Officer, Federation of Disability Sport Wales

St Dunstan’s (for men and women blinded on war service) provides an independent future for blind ex-Service men and women. 12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1A 4XD. Telephone: 0207 723 5021 Fax: 0207 262 6199; email enquiries@st-dunstans.org.uk; website: www.st-dunstans.org.uk

Suppliers of special equipment:
There are lots of aids and special equipment available to help visually impaired people retain their independence. Devices can help you see to read, write or tell the time more easily, use a telephone, cook meals, make hot drinks or get safely across the road. Social Services can supply some equipment and other devices can be bought locally or through mail order from a number of organisations. The cost of buying equipment will depend on your abilities and what you want to do, but before you buy any, it’s best to shop around for the one that best suits your need. Some centres and displays can give you ‘hands-on’ experience and independent advice. RNIB Resource Centre (telephone 020 7391 2656) or Ability Net (01932 336512) may be useful contacts.

General equipment
RNIB Telephone 0845 702 3153; email cservices@rnib.org.uk; website www.rnib.org.uk
Daylight Company Telephone 020 8964 1200; fax 020 8964 1300 email customerservice@daylightcompany.com; website www.uk.daylightcompany.com
Force 10 (Sound and vision aids and computer hardware and software) Telephone 0845 165 1202; email sales@forcetenco.co.uk; website www.forcetenco.co.uk
Dolphin Computers Telephone 01905 754 577; email info@dolphinuk.co.uk; website www.yourdolphin.com
Cobolt Systems Ltd. Telephone 01493 700172 email cobolt@compuserve.com; website www.cobolt.co.uk
IC Online Ltd. Telephone 01226 762528; email info@ic-online.co.uk
SYLW! is Wales Council for the Blind’s e-bulletin that is available on their website and covers events, consultations, new policies and developments in service provision relating to visual impairment in Wales.  
www.wcb-ccd.org.uk/English/sylw/sylw.htm
To subscribe / resubscribe to Sylw! email subscribe@wcb-ccd.org.uk

Talking Bills  
Electricity, Gas and Water companies should provide these on request. Contact your provider for more information.

Talking books, newspapers, newsletters and magazines  
Talking newspapers are provided by local and national voluntary associations for people with a visual impairment. There is a wide range of national newspapers and magazines available on tape. For further information contact your local Rehabilitation Officer or TNAUK.  
Telephone 01435 866102; email info@tnauk.org.uk; website www.tnauk.org.uk

RNIB’s Talking Book Service provides a wide range of books on compact disks and supplies the special machine needed. The annual subscription allows an unlimited number of books to be borrowed each year.  
PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS
Telephone 0845 762 6843; Fax 01733 371555; email cservices@rnib.org.uk; website www.rnib.org.uk

See also Calibre Talking Book Library,

Talking Newspaper Association of the United Kingdom (TNAUK) provides national newspapers and magazines on audio tape, computer disk, e-mail, internet download and CD-ROM for visually impaired and disabled people who find reading a strain.  
Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 8DB.
Telecare
Social Services can provide sensors linked to the Care-Link monitoring system. These can help you to continue to live more independently at home. For details ring Social Services on 01352 702642.

Television
People registered as severely sight impaired / blind are entitled to an annual reduction of 50% on their television licence. A certificate can be supplied by your local Social Services Department, which should be shown when renewing the licence. Anyone over the age of 75 now receives a free TV licence; this applies to any household where one member is over 75 years regardless of their medical condition. A T.V. sound receiver which enables people with a visual disability to listen to the sound content of T.V. programmes is available for purchase from the RNIB. No T.V. licence is required for this set.
Telephone 0870 241 6468; text phone 0870 575 8604; email tvlscsc@capita.co.uk. website www.tvlicensing.co.uk for help and information about your licence.

Telephones BT 195 is a free directory enquiry service for people who would find using a telephone directory difficult. Telephone 0800 587 0195 Monday to Friday between 8.30 am and 5 pm. You can still use the free service if BT is not your supplier.

BT Age and Disability Action provides products and services for older or disabled people who need help using the telephone. Telephone 0800 800150; email disability@bt.com; website www.bt.com

Telephones for the Blind Fund can provide financial assistance towards the cost of telephone line installation and/or line rental for registered blind (not partially sighted) people of limited financial means 7 Huntersfield Close, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 0DX. Telephone / Fax 01737 248032; website www.tftb.org.uk Torch Trust for the Blind provides Christian literature, fellowship and support for visually impaired people www.torchtrust.org Torch House, Hallaton, Market Harborough, Leciester, LE16 8UJ. Telephone 0870 7700 272; Fax 0870 7700 262
V

**Vision Aid** is a national organisation supporting visually impaired children, their families and professionals
106 Junction Road, Deane, Bolton, BL3 4NE.
**Telephone 01204 64265; Fax 01204 855937**
**email enquires@visionaid.org.uk; website www.visionaid.org.uk**

**Vision Support** is a charity providing local support and services to people of all ages living with a vision impairment in Cheshire and North Wales.
Units 1 & 2 The Ropeworks, Whipcord Lane, Chester CH1 4DZ.
Telephone: 01244 381515
**Website: www.visionsupport.org.uk**

**Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching And Research (VICTAR)**
The University of Birmingham has a long history of work in the area of visual impairment and education. **Telephone 0121 414 4866; email education@bham.ac.uk**
**website www.education.bham.ac.uk/research/victar**

**VocalEyes** works at a variety of venues and with a range of partner organisations to enhance engagement with the arts for blind and partially sighted people.
First Floor, 54 Commercial Street, London E1 6LT
Tel: 020 7375 1043; Fax: 020 7247 5622; website: **www.vocaleyes.co.uk**

W

**Wales Council for the Blind** is the umbrella organisation for visual impairment in Wales. It works with the Welsh Assembly, local authorities and voluntary organisations to monitor and improve services. They produce a monthly e-bulletin, SYLW, that is available on their website and covers events, consultations, new policies and developments in service provision relating to visual impairment in Wales.
**Telephone 029 2047 3954; email staff@wcb-ccd.org.uk; website: www.wcb-ccd.org.uk**

**Website accessibility** - people with a visual impairment may be able to access electronic information through screen readers / speech output systems, Braille displays or screen magnification and in many cases use the keyboard rather than the mouse. When using a keyboard is difficult, you might consider using voice recognition for spoken commands. **W3C (World Wide Web Consortium)** is a useful website for people who want to find out more about identifying the most effective solution to web access.
**Website: www.w3c.rl.ac.uk**
Welsh Cassette Service (Casetiau Cymraeg) is a library of Welsh tapes, covering a wide range of topics from Welsh literature to modern novels, all in the Welsh language. For further information on joining the library, telephone 01267 238225 or write to:
1 Penlan, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire, SA31 2BT.

Write Away is an organisation that facilitates and encourages writing and other forms of communication through penfriend clubs for people with disabilities or special needs.
1 Thorpe Close, London W10 5XL
Telephone 0845 456 5450; Textphone 020 8964 4225; Fax 020 8964 3532; website www.write-away.org

Writing
It is still possible to continue writing, even if it’s just your signature, by using certain hand writing equipment like cheque book signature and envelope guides. Writing letters with a hand writing frame will help you to write in a straight line. You may find using a black felt tip pen helpful when writing. For further information, contact your Rehabilitation Officer for People with a Visual Impairment.

X

Y

Young carers see Support for Carers on page 23