



Hampshire
County Council

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT



Children with special educational needs

Visual Impairment

A guide for parents and carers

This leaflet is for parents and carers who are concerned about their child's eye sight and how it will affect his/her development and education.

What is a visual impairment?

A visual impairment is usually the result of an eye condition, diagnosed by a consultant ophthalmologist, which has an impact on lifestyle, work, reading, watching television etc. For some children additional arrangements and support will be needed.

What can cause a visual impairment?

A visual impairment can be the result of a number of causes including: a genetic condition, difficulties at birth, illness, trauma, or accidental injury.

How does a visual impairment affect sight?

Your child's sight may be affected in one or more of the following ways:

Reduced distance vision – seeing objects at a distance is not easy

Reduced near vision – reading small print is difficult or not possible

Reduced field of vision – only a partial picture is seen at a glance

Erratic eye movement – difficulties focusing and scanning

Fluctuating vision – visual levels vary due to a range of factors eg reduced lighting, tiredness, etc.

What types of eye conditions are there?

There are many eye conditions which may result in a child having a visual impairment. The most usual ones are listed on page 8 of this leaflet. Detailed information about each eye condition can be obtained from your child's ophthalmologist, Teacher Adviser for Visual Impairment, Paediatric Rehabilitation Officer, the RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) and the Internet.

What do I do if my child does not see very well?

You might wish to talk to your family doctor who can refer your child to an Ophthalmologist.

Referrals are accepted directly to the Teacher Advisers.

What does the
Teacher
Adviser do?

The Teacher Adviser for Visual Impairment has a varied role dependent on the needs of the individual child. Support includes:

Advice

Sharing information and making recommendations to parents/carers and other professionals

Assessment

Using observation, standardised and informal assessments of functional vision to complement medical information

Monitoring

Regular checking of progress

Teaching

Direct teaching of specialist skills

Training

Developing awareness and understanding of visual impairment

Resources

Assessment, advice and training on specialist equipment

Liaison

Maintaining contact with parents/carers, professionals and voluntary agencies.

What does the
Paediatric
Rehabilitation
Officer do?

Referrals to Paediatric Rehabilitation Officers are made through registration by a consultant or via a Teacher Adviser.

The Paediatric Rehabilitation Officer for Visual Impairment also provides support and advice on the basis of the child's assessed needs. Support includes:

Advice

Sharing information and making recommendations

Assessment

Assessing areas of need in the development of independence, mobility and daily living skills

Training

Mobility – walking and travelling independently and safely

Communication – adapted communication mediums to suit the individual

Daily living skills – adapted skills to achieve age-appropriate independence

Developing awareness and understanding of visual impairment

Advocacy

Acting as an advocate for the family

Resources

Assessment, advice and training on specialist equipment

Liaison

Maintaining contact and joint working with parents/carers and other professionals in health, education and the voluntary sector.

What other professionals may be involved?

A number of other professionals may be involved with your child:

Consultant Ophthalmologist

A specialist in the clinical assessment and treatment of eye conditions

Educational Psychologist

Concerned with a child's learning, understanding, play behaviour and how they affect their development

General Practitioner

Concerned with the general health of the child and family

Health Visitor

A trained nurse who visits young children at home

Ophthalmic Optician (Optometrist)

Assesses vision, the health of the eye, prescribing and fitting glasses and contact lenses

Orthoptist

Assesses vision, including squints

Paediatric Occupational Therapist

Assesses and treats children with gross and fine motor co-ordination problems

Paediatric Physiotherapist

Helps with the correct positioning of a child when working in school and at play. Advises on walking aids, hand function and exercises for chest conditions

Paediatrician

A specialist doctor in children's development

Portage Worker

A home visitor offering support, advice and ideas for pre-school children.

What support
will my child
get in pre-
school/school?

Children under four years

Teacher Advisers/Paediatric
Rehabilitation Officers/Portage Home
Visitors can make home visits to support
and advise you on appropriate
programmes to help your child's early
development and make best use of
whatever vision your child may have.
Your child may also be attending a pre-
school group with other children of
his/her age.

Children in pre-school/ school

Teacher Advisers visit children referred
to them in a variety of settings to
monitor their progress; advise staff
working daily with them; train support
staff, provide specialist teaching and
equipment as required. Most children
with a visual impairment are able to
attend their local pre-school/mainstream
school with or without the need for
additional support. Paediatric
Rehabilitation Officers also visit when
appropriate.

Specialist Resourced Provision in mainstream schools

There are two mainstream schools with resourced provision which have their own dedicated teachers and support staff to cater for a small group of children who need greater support to access the curriculum. Details of these schools are given on page 13 of this booklet. Placement in resourced provision is decided by the Education Department.

Other children visit the resourced provision schools for specialist activities and events. The staff also offer support to other schools around the county.

Types of eye conditions

Some types of eye conditions giving rise to a visual impairment are given below:

Albinism

A condition associated with a lack of pigment. Nystagmus and photophobia may also be present

Aniridia

The iris does not develop fully before birth. Photophobia and nystagmus may be present

Cataracts

A clouding of the lens. It may require treatment

Coloboma

Incomplete development of the eye structure

Cerebral Visual Disorder

The brain does not fully receive and/or interpret visual messages

Glaucoma

The pressure in the eye is higher or lower than normal

Hemianopia

A lack of vision in half of the visual field

Hypermetropia

Long sighted. Near vision is reduced

Macular Degeneration

Pigment on the retina (macula) affects central and colour vision but leaves peripheral vision intact

Myopia

Short-sighted. Distance vision is blurred or out of focus

Nystagmus

An involuntary rhythmic movement of the eye

Optic Atrophy

The optic nerve is under developed.
The area affected impedes sight correspondingly

Photophobia

The eye cannot adjust to bright light

Retinitis Pigmentosa

A gradual build up of pigment on the retina reducing field of vision and the ability to see in poor light

Retinopathy of prematurity

A condition of the retina occurring most frequently in low weight and premature babies

Visual/perceptual

The inability of the brain to interpret spatial and visual imagery.

Contacts **Teacher Advisers VI and
Educational Psychologists**

Local Education Offices

North Hampshire

Fleet Local Office

Birch House

Barley Way

Fleet GU13 8YB

Tel: 01252 814777

West Hampshire

Winchester Local Office

Clarendon House

Romsey Road

Winchester SO22 5PW

Tel: 01962 876345

South Hampshire

Havant Local Office

River Way

Havant PO9 2EL

Tel: 023 9244 1409

Social Services Offices

For Paediatric Rehabilitation Officers:

South of county

Romsey Social Services
Former Magistrates Court
Church Street, Romsey SO51 8AQ
Tel: 01794 526000

North of county

Alton Area Office
Park House, High Street, Alton GU34 1EN
Tel: 01420 544255

Education

Parent Partnership Service
Hampshire County Council – Education
County Office, The Castle
Winchester SO23 8UG
Tel: 01962 845870

Portage Service
Aquitaine House, 2-5 Clement Street
Winchester SO23 9DR
Tel: 01962 813893

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service
Hampshire County Council – Education
County Office, The Castle
Winchester SO23 8UG
Tel: 01962 846452

Schools with resourced provision for VI

Great Binfields Primary School
Binfields Farm Lane
Chineham
Basingstoke RG24 8AJ
Tel: 01256 460532

The Toynbee School
Bodycoats Road
Chandlers Ford SO53 2PL
Tel: 023 8027 4266

Hospitals in Hampshire

Frimley Park Hospital Ophthalmology Dept
Tel: 01276 604217

North Hants Hospital Ophthalmology Dept
Tel: 01256 313261

Queen Alexandra Hospital Eye Dept
Tel: 023 9228 6444

Royal Hants County Hospital
Ophthalmology Dept
Tel: 01962 824444

Ophthalmology Directorate Southampton
General Hospital
Tel: 023 8079 4645

Voluntary Agencies

Hampshire Association for the Care
of the Blind (HACB)
25 Church Road
Bishopstoke
Eastleigh SO5 6LB
Tel: 023 8064 1244
Website: **www.hacb.org.uk**

Kid's Family Centre
Delta House
Salterns Lane
Fareham PO16 0QS
Tel: 01329 312312

Look National (Parents Support Group)
Queen Alexandra College
49 Court Oak Road
Birmingham B17 9TG
Tel: 0121 428 5038

Look Solent
Tel: 023 9229 5925

National Blind Children's Society (NBCS)
Bradbury House
Market Street
Highbridge
Somerset TA9 3BW
Tel: 01278 764764
Website: **www.nbcs.org.uk**

Partially Sighted Society
The Sight Centre
9 Plato Place
72/74 St Dionis Road
London SW6 4TU
Tel: 020 7371 0289
e-mail: london@partsight.org.uk

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Tel: 020 7388 1266
Website: www.rnib.org.uk

SENSE
Head Office
11-13 Clifton Terrace
Finsbury Park
London N4 8SR
Tel: 020 7272 7774
Website: www.sense.org.uk

Vision Aid
Guy Salmon House
22A Chorley New Road
Bolton BL1 4AP
Tel: 010 204 531882

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This leaflet is available in large print – please
contact the SEN Service on 01962 846452