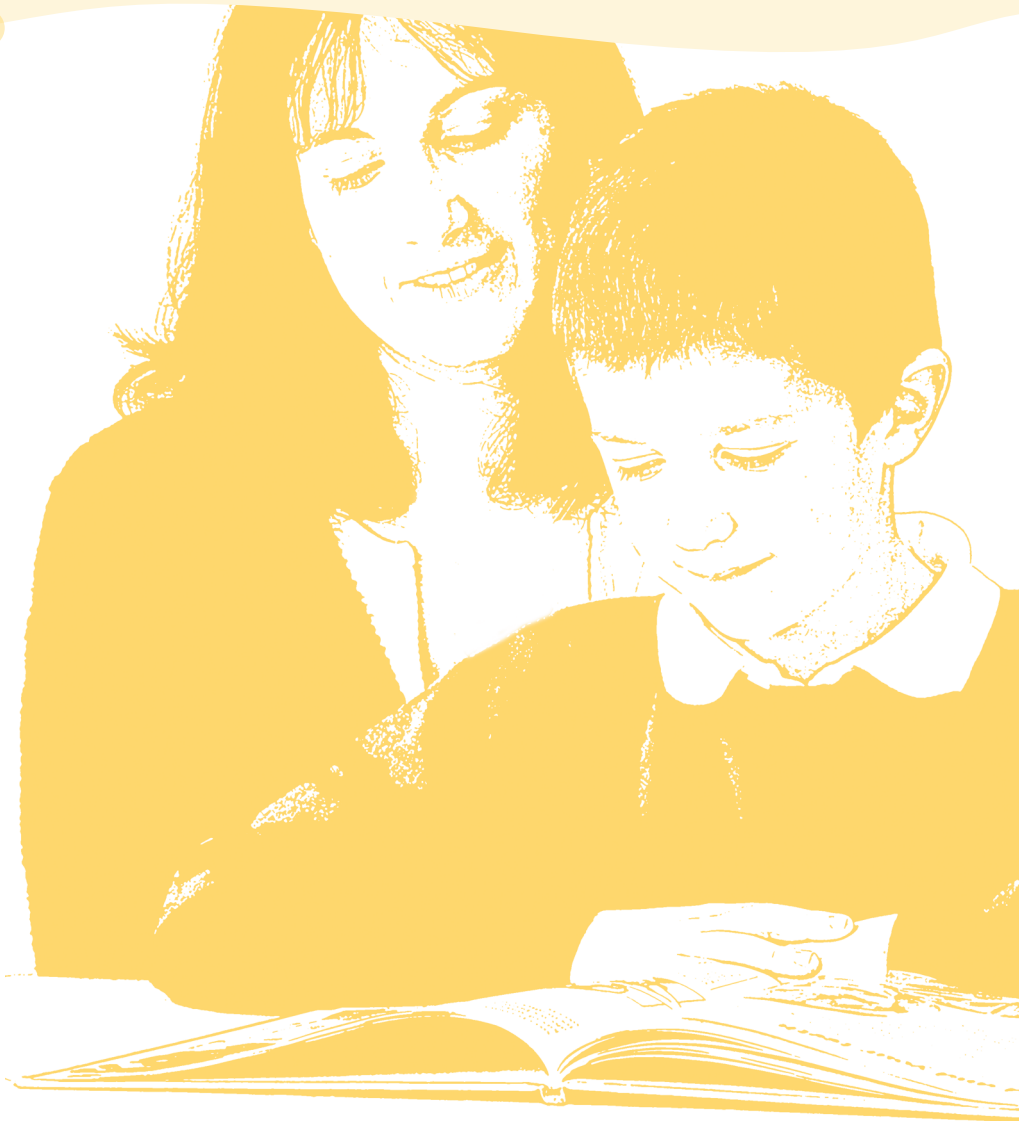


Visual Impairment

A guide for parents and carers



Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)



Hampshire
County Council



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 education and development.

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.

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 in focusing and/or scanning

Fluctuating vision – visual levels vary due to a range of factors e.g. 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. Detailed information about each eye condition can be obtained from your child's Ophthalmologist, Specialist Teacher Adviser for Visual Impairment, RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) and the Internet.

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

In the first instance if you suspect your child does not see very well contact your family doctor who can refer your child to an Ophthalmologist.

Once a diagnosis has been made a referral can be made directly to the Specialist Teacher Advisory Service.

What does the Specialist Teacher Adviser do?

The Specialist 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 and other professionals

Assessment

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

Liaison

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

Monitoring

Regular checking of progress

Referrals

Specialist Teacher Advisers may make a referral to Mobility and Independence Specialist

Resources

Assessment, advice and training on specialist equipment

Teaching

Direct teaching of specialist skills

Training

Developing awareness and understanding of visual impairment

What does the mobility and independence specialist do?

Referrals to mobility and independence specialists (Habilitation Officers) are made through the registration process or via a Specialist Teacher Adviser.

The Habilitation Officer provides support and advice on the basis of the child's assessed needs and works in close collaboration with the specialist teacher advisers.

Support includes:

Assessment

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

Liaison

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

Training

- Mobility – walking and travelling independently and safely
- Daily Living Skills – adapted skills to achieve age-appropriate independence

Which other professionals might 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 at work and at play. Advises on walking aids, hand function and exercises for chest conditions

Paediatrician

A specialist doctor in children's development

Portage Home Visitor

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

Specialist Teacher Advisers and mobility and independence specialists can make home visits to support and advise you on appropriate programmes to help your child's early visual development.

Children in pre-school and at their local school

Most children with a visual impairment are able to attend their local pre-school/mainstream school with or without the need for additional support.

Specialist Teacher Advisers visit children in a variety of settings to:

- monitor educational and developmental progress
- give advice to staff working daily with them
- train support staff
- provide specialist teaching and equipment as required
- introduce mobility and independence skills when appropriate.

Specialist resourced provision in mainstream schools

There are three mainstream schools with resourced provision for children with a visual impairment. They have their own dedicated teachers and support staff to cater for a small group of children with a visual impairment who need greater support to access the curriculum. Details of these schools are given on page 12 of this booklet.

Placements in resourced provisions are decided by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service of the Children's Services Department.

Children from other schools may also spend some time in the resourced provisions for specialist activities and social events. Staff from the resourced provisions may also offer support to other schools around the county.



Contacts

Specialist Teacher Advisers for Visual Impairment

Local Children's Services 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

Website: www3.hants.gov.uk/teacher-advisers

E-mail: stas@hants.gov.uk

Children's Services

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service

Hampshire County Council

Children's Services Department

Elizabeth II Court East

The Castle

Winchester SO23 8UG

Tel: 0845 603 5620

Website: www3.hants.gov.uk/sen-home.htm

E-mail: childrens.services@hants.gov.uk

Parent Partnership Service

Hampshire County Council

Children's Services Department

Elizabeth II Court East

The Castle

Winchester SO23 8UG

Tel: 01962 845870

Website: www.hants.gov.uk/parentpartnership

E-mail: enquiries.pps@hants.gov.uk



Schools with resourced provision for children with a visual impairment

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

Kings Copse Primary School
Kings Copse Road
Hedge End SO30 0PQ
Tel: 01489 785040

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

Action for Blind People (part of RNIB Group)

14-16 Verney Road

London SE16 3DZ

Central Office Tel: 020 7635 4800

RNIB helpline (for local team) Tel: 0303 123 9999

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Look National (Parents Support Group)

c/o Queen Alexandra College

49 Court Oak Road

Birmingham B17 9TG

Tel: 0121 428 5038

Website: www.look-uk.org

National Blind Children's Society (NBCS)

Bradbury House

Market Street

Highbridge

Somerset TA9 3BW

Tel: 01278 764764

Website: www.nbcs.org.uk

Open Sight
25 Church Road
Bishopstoke
Eastleigh SO50 6BL
Tel: 023 8064 1244
Website: www.opensight.org.uk

The Partially Sighted Society
7-9 Bennetthorpe
Doncaster DN2 6AA
Tel: 0844 477 4966
Website: www.partsight.org.uk

SENSE (National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association)
101 Pentonville Road
London N1 9LG
Tel: 0845 127 0060
Website: www.sense.org.uk



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or 0845 603 5620

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childrens.services@hants.gov.uk
or **Minicom: 0845 603 5625**