

Resources for children and young people with visual impairment and their families



Introduction

The information you find here has been put together especially for children and young people with visual impairment and their families. Professionals who work with such families may also find it useful.

The idea for this information pack came from discussions with children and young people with visual impairment and their families attending Great Ormond Street Hospital and Moorfields Eye Hospital. These discussions were part of our research on the quality of life of children and young people with visual impairment and focused on the period from ages 10 to 15 years. The children and young people and families who took part in this research highlighted various issues and problems they faced in their daily lives, but emphasised certain services and resources that they found helpful. It became clear to us that families did not have access to the same support services. For this reason, this pack pulls together all the valuable information provided to us by these families so that it can be shared with other children and young people with visual impairment and their families.

We hope that this pack tells you about some of the organisations, services, activity centres and groups that children and young people like you have found helpful. It is intended to be used alongside other information packs you may have.

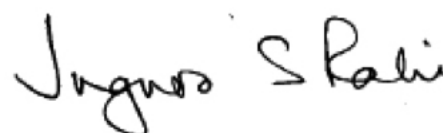
We thank the children and young people, and their families who participated in our research and the pupils and staff at Exhall Grange Specialist School and Science College (who provided the featured images) for their input into the development of this resource.

The information is divided into five themes:

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1: Practical and Emotional Support



Visionary

‘Visionary’ is an organisation which supports local sight loss charities to provide support services locally to children and people with visual impairment to improve their quality of life and empower them to achieve their full potential.

You can locate your nearest sight loss charity by entering your postcode on their website (see below). The local charities may provide a range of services such as:

- home visiting
- counselling
- children and carer local support groups
- assistive technology

If the services you are looking for are not available with a particular charity or if you are unable to reach the local service, you can contact Visionary directly.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 020 8417 0942

Email: visionary@visionary.org.uk

Website: www.visionary.org.uk

VICTA – Visually Impaired Children Taking Action

‘VICTA’ is a national charity that brings together children with visual impairment as well as their families to exchange experiences and obtain mutual support through:

- Online groups on Facebook and Twitter (for children and young people with visual impairment, parents and siblings)
- monthly newsletters
- family weekends with information sessions for parents, activities for children with visual impairment and their siblings (like mountain climbing and kayaking) and a space to meet other young people and families and talk about things that bother you.

VICTA provides grant-giving schemes to children and young people (up to age 25) for specialist equipment for home-use or vacation schemes. Their website provides further links to national charities, condition-specific charities, specialist equipment suppliers and local blind associations, which provide nationwide services, condition-specific information and local support services.

Information and contact details:

Tel: 01908 240831

Email: admin@victa.org.uk

Website: www.victa.org.uk

Infosound

‘Infosound’ is a free public service across the UK which offers information to people with vision loss on topics directly concerned with living with eyesight difficulties (newly diagnosed or long-standing) in easily accessible audio formats.

The audio features available are on a range of topics such as health, employment, finances, leisure, daily living, mobility, support and so on, along with people’s life stories of living with visual impairment. These are available to download from their website.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 03000 111 555

Email: info@infosound.org.uk

Website: www.infosound.org.uk

In Touch

‘In Touch’ is a programme on BBC Radio 4 that broadcasts news, views and information for people who are blind or partially sighted. The programmes cover various topics, and there is a comprehensive archive of past programmes available for listening.

Further information about ‘In Touch’ can be accessed at the website below, which also has links to newsletters, useful contacts and other shows such as the Ouch! Talk Show.

Information:

Website: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxww

LOOK

‘Look’ is a charity that provides emotional support, practical advice and information to parents and carers of children with eyesight problems and has a linking service between families. Parents can interact online or participate in regional and national events.

‘Look’ has regional parent support groups - details and links on their website.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0121 428 5038

Email: office@look-uk.org

Website: www.look-uk.org

Contact A Family

‘Contact A Family’ puts you in touch with other families with children and young people who have the same condition as your child.

Provide support, advice and information for families:

- freephone helpline – gives information and advice on a range of issues including welfare rights, education, carer respite, local services and local support
- newsletters, parent guides and research reports to help parents stay informed
- medical information – information on various conditions and available support groups
- one-to-one support, both practical and emotional through their family support service, volunteer parent representatives and local offices across the U.K.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0808 808 3555 (free helpline)

Email: helpline@cafamily.org

Website: www.cafamily.org.uk

1. Practical and Emotional Support

2: Recreation, Leisure and Activity Groups for Children and Young People



OutLOOK

OutLOOK Youth Project provides services for children and young people between the ages of 11 and 25, who wish to participate in social events and meet other young people with visual impairment. Through their free Membership Scheme, you can access various services such as:

Connecting Service

Providing volunteering opportunities and social activities; funding opportunities to improve your social life and connecting with another young person with visual impairment.

Audio Magazine Service

Providing audio magazines and podcasts, and opportunities for young people to appear in the Audio Magazine (music, interviews, reports)

Youth-Led Events Service

- educational and training events (for example volunteering, self-development, organising events as audio magazine correspondents)
- consultation and youth participation for example, participating in events and having a say in which services are important
- campaigning (involvement with youth, disability/youth issues and visual impairment campaign events)

To find out more you can contact the OutLOOK Youth Project - details below.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0121 428 5038

Email: office@look-uk.org

Website: www.look-uk.org

Action for Blind People

Action for Blind People is a national charity, which provides access to practical help and support offered locally to people of all ages who are blind and partially sighted. Through them you can access various services for children and young people as listed below.

Actionnaires

‘Actionnaires’ are sports and activities clubs across the UK organised by Action for Blind People for children and young people aged 8 to 16 with eyesight problems. Actionnaires offer an opportunity for exciting or novel activities such as:

- zip wire and climbing
- pizza express workshop
- ceramics painting
- bell-boating
- kayaking
- raft building
- baking
- fencing

You can participate in activities organised in your region by looking at the Actionnaires activities calendar and contacting your local Actionnaires club (see website below).

Action Activity Weeks

An opportunity for children and young people with sight loss who are attending mainstream schools to meet and engage in various indoor and outdoor activities, make new friends and have fun.

Transitions

Support and advice is offered to young people aged 14-25 years covering issues such as education, employment, social life, independent living and recreational activities.

Field Studies

These enable young people like you to learn about the environment, make new friends and have a holiday.

More information about events and activities, newsletters, family weekends and more is available online or by phone.

Information and contact details:

Phone (through RNIB Helpline): 020 7635 4800

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

British Blind Sport

This charity enables people with visual impairment to have access and opportunities for sports such as archery, athletics, cricket, football, shooting, ten pin bowling, martial arts and mountain biking. They organise taster days and championships for each sport. You can try your hand at one of these, become a member or find out more by using contact details below. British Blind Sport can also provide links to other sporting facilities and associations.

British Blind Sport remains the governing body for the sport of GOALBALL. Other sports have been included in their mainstream governing bodies since the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 (now replaced by the Equality Act).

Information and contact details:

Phone: 01926 424247

Email: info@britishblindsport.org.uk

Website: www.britishblindsport.org.uk

Disability Snowsport UK

This organisation offers an opportunity for people with disabilities to experience skiing and snowboarding.

They offer group and individual skiing lessons by qualified adaptive instructors across different areas of the UK through the winter months.

Lesson formats and costs range from a private lesson for a single person costing £40 per hour, to a group lesson for 7 costing £110 per hour. This includes the cost of instruction, equipment and slope fee. You will be provided with a lesson which would be the best fit for you.

You can also find your nearest local group involved in snow sports through Disability Snowsport UK.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 01479 861272

Email: lessons@disabilitysnowsport.org.uk

Website: www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk

Blind Sailing

This charity provides an opportunity for people who are blind and partially sighted to experience or learn sailing. It organises regular training sessions and racing events and provides coaching to enable participation at both national and international events.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 07796 687914

Email: Sailing@BlindSailing.net

Website: www.blindsailing.net

English Federation of Disability Sport (Disability Sport Events)

This organisation provides a useful calendar and news of events on sports and activities that you may find interesting.

Information and contact details:

Phone (Loughborough office): 01509 227750

Phone (Manchester office): 0161 228 2868

Website: www.efds.co.uk

Some area-specific sports clubs

Based in London:

Metro Sports Club

A sports and social club, which provides sport and recreational activities for a very large number of adults and children with visual impairment in the London Area.

Information and contact details:

Website: metroblindsport.org

Based in Coventry:

**Visually Impaired and Sighted
Tandem Association (VISTA)**

Tandem cycling club for people with visual impairment and their families, which organises sports and activity events countrywide

Information and contact details:

Phone: 07901 520 402

Email: info@vista.org.uk

Website: www.vista.org.uk

Calibre Audio Library

This is a library service, which provides access to a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction books digitally in various audio formats - MP3, audio cassettes or USB. There are over 1,400 books for children and young people to choose from, called Young Calibre, which has a separate website.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 01296 432 339

Email: enquiries@calibre.org.uk

Websites: www.calibre.org.uk, www.youngcalibre.org.uk

Listening Books

This organisation provides postal or internet-based access to audiobooks for learning or leisure at a monthly subscription.

They have a range of audiobooks for children and young people across various topics such as art, poetry, music, psychology, science as well as fiction and non-fiction, from Enid Blyton and Jane Austen to BBC commentaries.

The 'Listening Books' can help at school because their service supports the National Curriculum from Key Stage 2 to A-level and they can make available many texts and study guides in audio format that are unavailable elsewhere. These books can be easily accessed by downloading online, streaming from the website or on CDs through the post.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 020 7407 9417

Email: info@listening-books.org.uk

Website: www.listening-books.org.uk

Clear Vision

‘Clear Vision’ library provides books in accessible formats (e.g. Braille or Moon) for children and young people with visual impairment. Library membership and postal services are free for families.

Clear Vision provides books suitable for pre-readers (with flaps, textures, sound buttons, etc), children learning to read, newly-fluent readers, hand-made Tactile Books and books on specific topics in Braille and books for young people. There is also a small collection of very simple books with added Moon text in their library.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 020 8789 9575

Email: info@clearvisionproject.org

Website: www.clearvisionproject.org

Living Paintings

This is a free postal library service of tactile books with audio description, which makes the experience of pictures and images accessible and enjoyable for people with visual impairment. They also provide:

- Living Picture Books (tactile and braille versions of well-known children's books) and special interest books that supplement the school curriculum for children and young people
- Services for galleries and libraries across the U.K. to make art more accessible for visitors who are visually impaired, by providing their 'Bat Service' – relief images with Braille headings.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 01635 299 771

Email: info@livingpaintings.org

Website: www.livingpaintings.org

Vocal Eyes

If you are interested in taking part in arts activities, 'Vocal Eyes' provides audio description services in theatres, museums and galleries. Audio description explains clearly and vividly the visual aspects of a play, painting or environment that may otherwise be missed.

In the past, Vocal Eyes have organised touch tours for musicals such as Lion King, Wicked and We Will Rock You, as well as Shakespearean plays such as Much Ado About Nothing, All's Well That Ends Well and As You Like It across various locations. A calendar of events for the year is also available on their website to help you choose which ones you want to attend.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 020 7375 1043

Email: enquiries@vocaleyes.co.uk

Website: www.vocaleyes.co.uk

Yourlocalcinema.com

This service provides accessible cinema experience to people with visual impairment.

More than 300 cinemas have facilities to screen latest films with audio description. You can find out about the cinemas in your local area that provide audio-described films, as well as which films are being screened, by contacting them directly or by visiting their website.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0845 056 9824

Email: ad@yourlocalcinema.com

Website: www.yourlocalcinema.com

Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) CARD

This is a cinema ticket scheme which entitles people with visual impairment to 'two-for-the-price-of-one' tickets in all participating cinemas. Application forms and further specifications of their annual membership can be found on their website.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0845 123 1292

Email: info@ceacard.co.uk

Website: www.ceacard.co.uk

2. Recreation, Leisure and Activity Groups for Children and Young People

3: Career – Advice, Skills and Support



BLIND IN BUSINESS

‘Blind in Business’ is a charity operating across the UK to help young people who are partially sighted and blind with deciding, planning and preparing for jobs and careers. They provide various services and training courses free, and typically work with young people aged 13 years and older.

Some training courses provided by the charity are:

- A career planning hands-on day course, which gives children an understanding of what types of careers are open to them. The course includes practical activities such as mock interviews for jobs and playing adapted games used by employers
- A technology course, giving children the right skills to make technology decisions, for home, school and eventually the workplace.
- A parents’ workshop involving blind and visually impaired role models, such as teachers and lawyers.
- One-to-one tutoring sessions for young people who want some one-to-one training or simply need a confidence boost.

The charity also offers a buddying and mentoring scheme, as well as employment ‘A level & graduate’ services, helping young people into work and higher education. They also offer assistance with filling in forms, mock interviews, assessment centres and obtaining work experience.

All the services provided by 'Blind in Business' are completely free of charge.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 020 7588 1885

Email: info@blindinbusiness.org.uk

Website: www.blindinbusiness.org.uk

3. Career – Advice, Skills and Support

4: Technology



We recognise that technology is extremely important and you are likely to use various technologies in your everyday life. As technology changes so quickly and this information needs to be regularly updated, detailed information about assistive technologies has not been provided in this booklet. Instead, you can access links and websites of the key organisations providing up-to-date information on technologies in the next section of this booklet.

Additionally, you can contact the British Computer Association of the Blind, a charity which actively promotes the use of computers and technology at home, in work and in education.

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0845 643 9811

Email: info@bcab.org.uk

Website: www.bcab.org.uk

5: Key Organisations



Here are listed some of the key organisations that provide further information, services and support to children and adults with visual impairment and their families:

National Blind Children's Society

Information and contact details:

Phone: 01278 764 764 (Head Office)

Website: www.nbcs.org.uk

Royal National Institute of Blind People

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0303 123 9999

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

Information and contact details:

Phone: 0118 983 5555

Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk

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