

Sight loss – General Information

WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK



This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape, disc and can be translated into different languages.

Information sheet F1

March 2015

This information sheet is about:

- First steps you can take if you have developed a sight loss
- How to get help if you look after someone who has a sight loss
- Registering your sight loss
- Help from adult social care services

First steps you can take if you have developed a sight loss

There are over 2 million people in the United Kingdom who have severe sight loss. Sight loss can affect people of any age, but is more common in later life.

Sight loss affects every area of life. You may be having problems reading books, newspapers or correspondence, or managing your cooking and housework. You may also be having difficulties getting around outdoors, coping at work, taking part in leisure activities or carrying on with hobbies. Losing your sight can also affect you emotionally, and you may be feeling shocked, angry, frustrated and depressed.

There are many services available that can help you. This information sheet tells you about organisations that can provide you with support, and other information sheets that give details about services and equipment to help you.

Where to get more help

If you develop a sight loss, you should first visit your GP, who can arrange for you to see an eye specialist at your local hospital. They may be able to treat you. If this is not possible they can put you in touch with other organisations that can help.

Somerset Sight

This is a local voluntary organisation that helps people who have sight loss, and their carers. Somerset Sight provides a range of services, such as information, social activities, a newsletter, a mobile resource bus, and has a resource centre where you can try out and purchase equipment.

There are six-week courses, '**Living with Sight Loss**', available for people with newly diagnosed sight loss, or people who are finding it difficult to cope with their visual impairment. The courses cover topics such as, equipment that can help you, making the most of your remaining sight, getting around safely, and ways of communicating.

Phone: 01823 333818

Email: administration@somersetsight.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Website: www.somersetsight.org.uk (hyperlink)

RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind)

This is a large national organisation that provides a wide range of equipment and talking books, as well as information about benefits, education, employment, and holiday and leisure activities.

Helpline: 0303 123 9999

Website: www.rnib.org.uk (hyperlink)

The RNIB also has a useful online directory of information:
www.sightlinedirectory.org.uk (hyperlink)

Action for Blind People

This is another national organisation, working closely with the Royal National Institute of the Blind, which provides a range of services. These include support with day-to-day living, advice about welfare rights, housing and employment, help for children and young people with a visual impairment, and support with technology.

Action for Blind People
10 Still House Lane
Bedminster
Bristol BS3 4EB

Phone: 0117 953 7750

Email: bristol@actionforblindpeople.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk (hyperlink)

How to get help if you look after someone who has a sight loss

In Somerset, there is a carers support service that can provide a range of information, advice and support networks for carers. This service is run by an organisation called Compass Carers.

Phone: 01823 255911

Email: info@compassdisability.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Website: www.compasscarers.org.uk (hyperlink)

Registering your sight loss

The Government asks us to keep registers and record the numbers of people who have sight loss. This helps us plan future services. These are the advantages of registration:

- You may be entitled to some concessions, depending on your circumstances. For more information about concessions, see www.nib.org.uk/livingwithsightloss/registeringsightloss/Pages/registration.aspx (hyperlink)
- You may be able to receive specialist services and equipment from Adult Social Care

How to register

If your sight is very poor, and if no more treatment is possible, the eye specialist at the hospital may recommend that you register.

Depending on your degree of sight loss, your consultant can certify that you are either:

- Severely sight-impaired/blind
- Sight impaired/partially sighted

Although the consultant eye specialist decides who goes on the registers, we are responsible for keeping them. So, when you sign the Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) the consultant sends us a copy of the form.

The registers are completely confidential and comply with Data Protection Laws.

When we receive the form, an experienced sensory loss social worker will contact you to ask you if you want to be registered and to see if there is any help you need with your sight loss. The worker will also tell you if you are entitled to any concessions. If you wish, the worker will visit you to talk about your needs in more detail. There is more information about the help Adult Social Care can provide on the next page.

However, you do not need to be registered, or see a social worker if you feel you do not need it.

Help from Adult Social Care Services

We have specialist social care workers who can support people with a visual impairment. They can visit you in your own home to understand you and talk about any problems you have.

They can:

- Provide advice and information about what help is available for visually-impaired people,
- Advise you about simple alterations to make your home safer for you
- Advise you on concessions for people with sight loss
- Provide training to help you live independently, such as getting about, learning to read Braille and cooking
- If necessary, provide certain aids and equipment to help you
- Arrange for you to receive specialist services, such as low vision assessments, if you need them

Rehabilitation - training in the home

Rehabilitation workers can give you free advice and training in cooking and domestic skills in your own homes.

They can provide training in Braille and typing. Typing and keyboard skills are particularly important if you use a computer and other information technology.

Rehabilitation workers can also provide advice, safety tips and training if you have problems getting around outdoors on your own.

For more information contact your social worker, or **Somerset Direct**. (Somerset Direct is a telephone advice service that provides general information about things like services for older people, or people who have health problems or disabilities.) They have information about

services for people with sight loss, and can also arrange for you to see a specialist worker to look at your needs in more detail.

Somerset Direct SMS Text Enquiries:

Send us a message from your mobile phone to: 07781 482 858
(Normal text message rates apply, except to T-mobile users, who may be charged Europe Zone 1 rates)

Phone:

Phone lines are open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 4pm on Saturdays. For Deaf and hard of hearing callers, you can contact us using 'Text Relay' (by prefixing our contact numbers with 18001).

Phone: 0300 123 2224

Email: adults@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

Other information sheets

We have several other information sheets that provide information to help you cope with your sight loss. You can find them on our Sight loss webpage – www.somerset.gov.uk/sight (hyperlink)

F2 Sight loss – Help with reading

Talking books and newspapers, services from local libraries, large print services, Braille and Moon book services, other listening and reading and how to get material put into audio, large print and Braille.

F3 Sight loss – Emotional support

Face-to-face counselling, telephone helplines and counselling, support groups.

F4 Sight loss – Equipment

Special equipment and where to get it, magnifiers and lighting. How to find out more about high technology equipment and specialist computer software.

F5 Sight loss – Children and education

Help available from voluntary organisations for children with sight loss and their families, education and further education.

F6 Sight loss – Employment

Lots of information about where to get advice about employment if you have lost your sight.

F7 Sight loss – Leisure

Getting advice about hobbies and leisure activities, special activities, television and audio description services, help at cinemas and travel concessions for visually-impaired people.

Your opportunity to feedback

We welcome your comments about the services you receive. If you would like to tell us what you think, please either:

- Contact us on our website, www.somerset.gov.uk (hyperlink), or
- Speak to your social care worker.
- Phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224, or
- Contact the Adults and Health Customer Experience Officer:
Floor B2 East
County Hall
Taunton
TA1 4DY
Phone: 01823 359227
Email: customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape, disc and can be translated into different languages.