

Version: 5 FOI Status: Public	Derbyshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health & Health Working with Adults with a Visual Impairment Practice Guidance	Issued: May 2024 Review due: May 2026 Author: Tracie Bonnici
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Derbyshire County Council - Adult Social Care & Health

Working with Adults with a Visual Impairment Practice Guidance

Version 5

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If you would like to make any comments, amendments or additions please email
ASCH.adultcare.policy@derbyshire.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

This document contains practice guidance of relevance when working with people with a visual impairment.

Other practice guidance relating to sensory disability is available separately for working with:

- [People with a Hearing Impairment](#)
- [People with Dual Sensory Loss](#)

Services to people who are deaf and use sign language are currently under review and guidance will be produced when this is concluded.

The following information is for colleagues who work/plan to work with people who have a visual impairment. Where a person also has a learning disability, the sensory section of the [Working with People with Learning Disabilities Policy and Procedure](#) will offer further advice and areas to consider.

The information provided in this practice guidance aims to give you some idea of what you need to address when working with someone with a sensory loss/impairment. It will support you in developing the competencies required in this area of work.

You should complement this with your own professional development and training available to you from independent reading and our Adult Social Care and Health training section. It is recommended you take time to invest in internet searches or visit a local voluntary agency which supports people with a sensory disability.

We receive over 90% of our information through our sight and hearing senses; it is difficult to gain an adequate picture of the world without these senses. People who are blind or visually impaired are taught to use their hearing to make sense of the world. By listening carefully and remembering what others have said, blind and partially sighted people may develop a wide range of 'coping strategies'.

People with visual and hearing problems receive 'imperfect' or unclear sensory information. Some people may not have a 'visual memory', as they have always been blind or partially sighted. Others may never have heard most of the sounds around them and so are unable to work out their meaning. They may also need time to consider how to react.

We have a statutory responsibility to provide services and to adjust the environment and the way we do things, reviewing our practice in light of any forthcoming best practice guidelines etc. that underpin the rights and needs of people with sensory impairments.

The [Accessible Information Standard](#) aims to ensure people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss receive information they can easily read or understand with support, so they can communicate effectively with us. All organisations providing adult social care or NHS care must follow the Accessible Information Standard.

We all need to take individual responsibility to provide an inclusive and equal environment for the people with whom we become involved.

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2. Sensory Competences for Community Social Work Teams

Generic community social work teams are responsible for assessment and any on- going casework which may be required to meet the assessed eligible adult social care and support needs of all local people in their area. These competences outline the basic standard of knowledge and expertise community social work teams need to be able to provide the required standard of service response for local people with a sensory loss; capability to access relevant specialist services; sign-posting, information and advice, as well as sound ability to provide direct assistance when required.

Achieving the basic standard is a professional development responsibility for individual practitioners as well as a collective team responsibility. This should be addressed through professional supervision and the PDR process, as well as team development work. Relevant specialist technical input will be provided to support professional practice development where this is needed. The accompanying set of competencies for knowledge of hearing impairment is available in the document [Working with Adults with a Hearing Impairment Practice Guidance](#).

Knowledge of Sight Impairment – Impact and Scope for Support

1. Personal social and psychological implications - learning from “experts by experience”.
2. Some understanding of sight loss by undertaking the provided training in house or the one delivered by [Sight Support Derbyshire](#).
3. Dual sensory loss - definition and how specialist support is accessed and what support is available locally.
4. Low vision aid assessments - what they are and where you get one.
5. Assistive animal support available.
6. Voluntary sector services and organisations, including the Community Volunteer Service (CVS) - who’s who in your local area.
7. Completion of assessment for people with sight impairment and where the provision of a personal budget is the result, how to set up a simple direct payment for sensory equipment.
8. Welfare Benefits including completing claim forms – who can assist people with sight impairment.
9. Support groups and universal offer – self run groups in the local area.
10. Sight registration - how it happens and the benefits for people who do register.
11. VIP (Visually Impaired Person) days (provided for people newly registered and their Carers) – what they are and how are they accessed.
12. Advocacy services including Derby and Chesterfield law centres.

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3. Legislative Framework - Specific Relevance to Sensory Disability

Local authorities' functions relating to provision of care and support for adults are set out in Part 1, Care Act 2014. This replaced local authority responsibilities for adults previously contained in the [National Assistance Act 1948](#) and the [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 \(CSDPA 1970\)](#) – both of which had considerable reference specifically to supporting disabled people. (The CSDPA 1970 still applies to children).

Under section 77, [Care Act 2014](#) and its associated regulations provide that local authorities must keep a register of people who are sight impaired (SI) and severely sight impaired (SSI) in its area.

Additionally, part 3 of the [Children and Families Act 2014](#) introduces a new statutory framework for local authorities and clinical commissioning groups, to work together to secure services for children and young people – **up to the age of 25** – who have special educational needs (SEN) or a disability. This includes a new statutory code of practice which provides guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to meeting their needs.

The Equality Act 2010

The [Equality Act 2010](#) protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it's unlawful to treat someone.

For more information visit the [Equality Act 2010 Guidance website](#) and the [Derbyshire County Council website](#).

If you want to find out more about legislation search the web or join the departmental 'Community of Practice – Sensory' Group.

4. Working with Clients who have a Visual Impairment

Registration of People who are 'Sight Impaired' or 'Severely Sight Impaired'

The registration of people with sight loss remains a government requirement and dates back to soldiers returning from World War 1 who had been 'blinded'.

All local authorities *hold* a register of people who are either severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted). This register is voluntary and is completely confidential. Details will not be shared. Local authorities *do not* have any part to play in the actual decision that a person is declared 'sight impaired' or 'severely sight impaired'. Only a consultant can make that diagnosis. Eye sight that can be corrected by the wearing of glasses or contact lenses is not part of this classification. The classifications are as follows:

Severely sight impaired - someone who is severely sight impaired would at one time be said to be 'blind.' However on average only 5% of people in this category will be 'totally' blind. Most

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people will have some sight that can be used.

Sight impaired - the main group of people in this category will have sight that can be used with adjustments and 'low vision' equipment.

Registration is only complete when the local authority Adult Social Care and Health have been informed and completed the process of registration.

In the Derbyshire hospitals [Sight Support Derbyshire](#) currently provide volunteers to give assistance and advice. The consultant treating a person for sight loss should direct them to Sight Support Derbyshire. This can be very helpful as the shock of being told you are technically 'blind' or may become 'blind' and there is nothing more to be done, can be severe. Positive information of what can be done at this stage is most important.

The process for registration in Derbyshire is as follows:

1. The Consultant will complete a certificate of visual impairment (CVI) - the patient signs the form and is given a copy. A copy is sent to Derbyshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health. For all Derbyshire residents this is the North East Derbyshire office.
2. Adult Social Care and Health Business Services receive the CVI and contact is made to the person named on the form to confirm that they want to be registered (see *Appendix one*); at the same time an invite is given for the person to visit a local "Visually Impaired Person's group" (VIP group) to receive information about our services. This is organised by Sight Support Derbyshire on our behalf. The individual contacts DCC to agree to be registered. Their details are added to the register and a registration card is sent to the person.
3. Registration is now complete.

The benefits of registration for people severely sight impaired (blind) are:

- blind person's personal income tax allowance is higher than the standard person allowance
- covered by disability and equality legislation
- free NHS sight test
- fifty percent reduction in their TV license fee
- car parking concessions – for example for the partner of someone who is severely sight impaired
- free postage on items marked 'articles for the blind'
- local travel concessions
- disabled person's railcard
- exemption from BT directory enquiry charges

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5. Visual Impairment

Visual impairment is a term used to cover a vast range of sight problems. Whenever an eye is not healthy or is not working as it should and cannot be corrected by ordinary means, such as wearing corrective glasses, sight is impaired. For more information on specific eye conditions contact '[Sight Support Derbyshire](#)' or visit the [RNIB website](#).

Few people lose their sight suddenly; most sight deteriorates gradually over months or even years. Therefore, people have started to make adjustments to help themselves; because of this and the range of conditions resulting in sight loss, it is important that staff '**ask**' before they '**do**' anything and are guided by the person with the sight loss.

There are skills and adjustments you will need to make yourselves aware of. There is also a range of community equipment that can help. You can find out more from Sight Support Derbyshire, other voluntary organisations, or by researching the web information. It is important you are aware that it is an adult social care responsibility to make the required adjustments so that our services are inclusive and allow Adult Social Care and Health to provide services that do not discriminate.

The number of people who have a visual impairment in Derbyshire is now approximately 35,590 and by 2030 is projected to be approximately 745,600. This means Adult Social Care and Health needs to be sure it is equipped to meet this increase and with it the proportionate increase in the number of people with sight loss.

If you work with a person with a sight loss, ensure that you consider the following:

1. Make no assumptions about what someone can or cannot see - only 5% of people with a sight loss see 'nothing' at all, the rest will have retained an amount of usable vision. It is up to us to assist clients make the most of the vision they have.
2. Provide all information in an appropriate format e.g. large print, braille, on a disk, DVD, etc. or it may be best that you offer to read any information you give - '**ask**'.
3. Do not move things or disturb the way the room and furnishings are arranged. If you do, explain why, and return things to the way they were before you leave. You could move something out of a person's range of vision that they will struggle to find again.
4. Clearly describe any new environment where this is required. This is most important if someone enters a day service or has entered a residential unit for a short break or long-term care. If you are unsure contact the senior practitioner deaf and sensory team. You may also refer to 'rehabilitation and mobility officers' who can assist/teach them to adjust to their new situations. (*See section 7 on how to access them.*) If care is not taken, people with a sight loss will not have a successful time/outcome. They may withdraw and become scared of the environment, leaving them unable to find basic things for example, the way to the bathroom or the dining hall. Appearance can suffer because clients are unable to 'find' their clothes. The person and the family can become distressed when we fail to give the right attention at the right time - '**ask**'
5. Consider alternative options when watching a DVD or TV as audio description may be available; library staff can help you find more information or look at TV listings.

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6. Consider the range of equipment that can assist a person with a sight loss. The equipment ranges from a magnifier to assist with reading, writing etc. to a 'task' light. To look at the full range of equipment available use the [RNIB website](#).
7. [The library service](#) will assist sight impaired people to find books on tape ('talking books'), large print, how to access the home library service and offer an overall excellent service.
8. Financial benefits will need to be addressed. The benefits system is complex and there are a number of resources to support sight impaired people – the local [welfare benefits officer](#), the [local CAB](#) or [Sight Support Derbyshire](#) who will also identify support. The national voluntary agency [RNIB website](#) and '[seeability](#)' have a check list to follow. The Welfare Benefits team offer an income maximization check, which may be of benefit to many of our clients.
9. There are a number of support groups for people with a sight loss - more details via the library service or Sight Support Derbyshire.
10. Due to some eye conditions some individuals with a sight impairment may be severely affected at night and may need extra consideration when outside - they may well want to avoid going out and about in the dark.
11. Good lighting and 'colour contrast' is possibly the most important consideration for you to be aware of. Just simply changing a white cloth/wall for one with a strong colour contrast can allow a someone to find their food or the door to a room! You can try this yourself. Put a white plate next to a coloured plate on a white tablecloth and see the difference. Having low lighting may be soft and soothing but for a sight impaired person it can be extremely disabling. You may need to consider extra lighting in some situations. **'Ask' – what do they think they need?**
12. Low Vision Assessment - A person with a sight loss will receive an assessment of their sight and magnifiers/equipment may be provided. It is best to check to see if they have any magnifiers and to check if a new assessment may be required. If so contact [Sight Support Derbyshire](#) who can provide you with contact details for opticians that offer the low vision assessment.

6. People from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Communities

In addition to the person centred approach utilised within the assessment and self- directed support processes, further support is available for people from black Asian and minority ethnic communities from Sight Support Derbyshire.

Sight Support Derbyshire has specific funding from Adult Social Care and Health to meet the needs of people with a visual impairment within the BAME Communities. Contact Sight Support Derbyshire for more information.

7. Rehabilitation and Mobility Service for People with Sight Loss

A person with a sight loss is entitled to an assessment under the Care Act 2014. For people with sight loss this is best done via a home visit.

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When you have established the need for support in the home due to sight loss, or the person wants to get out and about again, but the sight loss is restricting this, then you can refer to the Rehabilitation team at Sight Support Derbyshire.. This is via a standalone episode/form on the case management system (Mosaic). Once you have completed the episode you can close the system and the form will automatically be transferred to Sight Support Derbyshire.

The rehabilitation service is funded by Adult Social Care and Health under contract with Sight Support Derbyshire.

Rehabilitation and Mobility Service - what is provided?

The rehabilitation and mobility officer (RMO) will work with people who have impaired vision to develop skills required to become as independent as possible and to remain as active as possible in their community. They will develop skills in the use of 'canes' and how to use them safely and usefully. The RMO will assist someone to find their way around their locality and to use public transport.

They can give advice on lighting and the best use of this, and the importance of using colour contrast. They will look to develop the individual's skills around the home and to develop safe techniques when preparing/cooking meals, shopping, and carrying out household tasks.

The officers can give advice on specialist equipment including getting the best out of a magnifier to enable best use of remaining vision.

Rehabilitation officers will teach 'tactile' communications, for example braille, moon, deafblind block alphabet, and the use of writing aids.

Information can be given on talking books, large print books/newspapers, and computer software.

The rehabilitation and mobility officers can work with family and carers and give information on how to get support at college or in employment.

8. Useful Resources

Community of Practice – Sensory Group.

This group consists of colleagues who can support you to develop knowledge, skills and confidence in working with people with sensory impairments. It consists of both DCC employees and voluntary sector representatives.

The group is open to all. For further details please contact [Tracie Bonnici](mailto:deafteam@derbyshire.gov.uk) or deafteam@derbyshire.gov.uk

Local Organisations

The details are correct on going to print but are subject to change over time, please contact Tracie Bonnici.

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Sight Support Derbyshire

A local voluntary organisation that supports people with sight loss across the county.

- 2a Wentworth House, Vernon Gate, Derby, DE1 1UR
- Telephone: 01332 292262
- Website: www.sightsupportderbyshire.org.uk.

Macular Degeneration Group

A local group that support people with macular degeneration in the Chesterfield area.

- Tel 01246 560259

Some National Organisations Sight Loss Support Groups:

- Royal National Institute for the Blind
- Seeability
- Guide Dogs

Factsheets

For more information on factsheets. Please contact deafteam@derbyshire.gov.uk

Remember that all the people we have covered here are people with a disability. All people with a disability are protected under equality duty. It is *YOUR* responsibility under equality legislation to adjust your practice to include all. It is *YOUR* responsibility to have in place communication support and to provide information in the required accessible format.

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Appendix 1. Consent to the Registration of Visual Impairment

SAMPLE LETTER

Fax (01246) 348889

Minicom (01246) 861852

Direct Dial (01629) 537171

Dear Mrs.....

Consent to the Registration of Visual Impairment

We have received a copy of your Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) from the (name of hospital) eye department. To complete your registration details, we need your consent to register and to share your information with other appropriate partner agencies, for example Sight Support Derbyshire. Please complete this form and return it to us in the stamped addressed envelope provided, as this original document is required to complete the process.

Please check the details are accurate.

Date of Birth:

***Please tick one box as appropriate and sign the letter. (A signature on its own will be assumed as an agreement to your name being placed on the register and your information being shared with partner agencies.)**

Please sign here:

*I agree to my name being added to the sight impaired/severely sight impaired register, and I do agree for my information to be shared with appropriate partner agencies.

☐

*I agree to my name being added to the sight impaired/severely sight impaired register, but I do **'not'** want my information shared with other agencies.

☐

*I do not agree to my name being added to the sight impaired/severely sight impaired register.

☐

If you require an assessment, please call the number below and request a home visit.

Call Derbyshire: 01629 533190

If you have agreed to us sharing your information you will receive an invitation to 'Derbyshire's Information Programme' for people with sight loss.

This is run on our behalf by **Sight Support Derbyshire.**

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At the event you will find out the support available from our Adult Social Care and Health Services and if required, you can then refer to **Call Derbyshire** on **01629 533190** for an assessment of your needs.

If you do not want us to share your information with 'Sight Support Derbyshire' and you require an assessment of your needs, please contact **Call Derbyshire** on **01629 533190**.

For more information on the support available from **Sight Support Derbyshire** you can contact them on: **01332 292 262**.

Why Register?

Registering with Derbyshire County Council can make it easier to get practical support from Adult Social Care and Health; it may also be a 'passport' to getting concessions and benefits, such as travel, parking and TV license concessions.

For example, as well as helping you get support with doing everyday tasks, becoming registered could entitle you to travel and other concessions such as the Disabled Persons' Railcard and local travel schemes.

If you are registered SSI (Blind) you are also entitled to a tax allowance worth approximately £2,000.00 annually, free NHS sight tests, Blue Badge parking and free postage on some items.

You will be entitled to a 'low vision' assessment. This will cover things such as magnifiers and lighting. To find out more, and for information on your local 'low vision' optician, contact Sight Support Derbyshire on the above number.

Sight Support Derbyshire have all their information available on www.sightsupportderbyshire.org.uk

Derbyshire County Council complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 and values the importance of your information and will safeguard it and keep it accurate.

Wherever possible we obtain the individuals consent before sharing their information so we can ensure they get the most appropriate care and support in the right circumstances.

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Appendix 2. Quiz – Visual Impairment

A small quiz - answers are found by reading above!

1. What is 'registration'?
2. Why do people with a visual impairment become registered?
3. Who will register a person with a visual impairment?
4. Where can you find out who is registered in Derbyshire?
5. Who are rehabilitation officers?
6. Who do rehabilitation officers work with?
7. How will a rehabilitation officer help?
8. How do you refer to a Rehabilitation officer?
9. Why is the word 'officer' used?
10. Who/where are the local voluntary agencies that will support people in Derbyshire?
11. How can the Equality duty assist, what is your responsibility?

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Author History

Approval and Authorisation History

Authored by:	Sue Mitchell Jenny Hudson	Senior Practitioner Service Manager	January 2014
Approved by:	Quality Assurance Group		

Change History

Version 1	Sue Mitchell Jenny Hudson	January 2014	New Guidance
Version 2	Sue Mitchell	January 2015	Update
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Version 4	Tracie Bonnici	February 2022	Update
Version 5	Tracie Bonnici	May 2024	Update