



Action for blind people

Getting On



A quick reference guide to
services for people with
a visual impairment

Losing some or all of your sight can be very distressing and have a big effect on your life. People tell us that they struggle with a range of emotions from shock, anger, sadness and frustration, to depression and grief. This is quite normal and understandably coping with these emotions can be very difficult.

Changes in your vision can affect reading, driving, your work and mobility, but there is support available and this can help you adjust. Just how much help you will need depends on how your vision has been affected, but whatever your sight loss, help is available.

Nearly two million people in the United Kingdom have a sight problem which cannot be corrected by glasses or surgery. Perhaps you have a problem with your sight, or are concerned about a relative or friend.

This booklet explains:

- how to get help and advice about your eyes
- what to do if your sight problem cannot be corrected
- the help available with getting about, employment and training, special equipment, money, housing and leisure, and
- what to do if your child has an eye problem.

If you have other questions, please phone our National Freephone Helpline on: **0800 915 4666** or email:

info@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Contents

What to do first

2



Children and parents

7



Employment and training

17



Equipment

22



Money

28



Housing

37



Consumer services

40



Transport

44



Leisure

48



Your rights

59



Information and support

62



What to do first



Eye tests

It is not always easy to tell if you have a potential eye problem so it is very important to have regular examinations about every two years from your local optician or optometrist. They offer a full eye examination service and not just a test for new glasses. If you cannot get to the optician, one may be able to visit you at home. There is a charge for eye tests, but see 'Health Benefits' in the Money section of this booklet for details of free eye tests. If your sight cannot be improved by wearing glasses, you can ask your optician to refer you to a Consultant Ophthalmologist (your GP can also do this for you).

Eye clinics and registration

There may be many reasons why you have lost some or all of your sight. It could be due to an eye condition, an accident or you may have been born with little or no sight. Whatever the reason, you have probably been seen and diagnosed by a Consultant Ophthalmologist (an eye specialist). The consultant may have registered you as sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind).

If your sight cannot be improved medically, your consultant may tell you about registering as sight impaired. This means that your name will be put on a list held by your local council's Social Services team, or in some areas, the local society for blind and partially sighted people. Being registered will usually entitle you to claim certain services and benefits. Depending on your degree of sight loss, you will be registered either as 'severely sight impaired, blind' or as 'sight impaired, partially sighted'. You can ask your optician, GP or Consultant Ophthalmologist for details about the exact process of registration in your area.

However, the Consultant may not have had the time to explain to you the vast array of opportunity and support that is available, even if nothing more can be done for your sight.

Action for Blind People

Action for Blind People does have the time and the expertise. We understand the life changes that people may need to make and can help them. We guide people through this difficult time and provide essential information and advice that will help them adapt to change.

Action for Blind People is a national charity that provides free and confidential support for blind and partially sighted people in all aspects of their lives.

One call to Action ensures that visually impaired people receive help with anything from finding a job, applying for benefits, housing issues, aids and adaptations, holiday

breaks or information on local services. Whatever the need, Action can help.

We can also offer advice to people who have a visually impaired friend or family member. People of any age can get in touch, regardless of their particular eye condition.

For issues outside our area of expertise, we have developed a network of partners who are experts in their field and we work with them to get the best possible deal for blind and partially sighted people. We guide people to the right partner, but we don't stop there. We ensure that the service received was right for them. If it wasn't then we find out why and help to solve the problem.

If you need help with anything to do with visual impairment, talk to our experts – talk to Action.

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Social Services and local societies

Usually, once you know that your eyesight cannot be improved by wearing glasses, but before you are actually registered, you can begin to receive help from your local Social Services team or local society for people with sight loss. Call Action for Blind People to find out their contact details. Social Services will carry out what is known as an assessment of needs, during which they work with you to identify what changes need to be made to your living situation to help you adjust to your sight loss. This varies from region to region, so ask your optician, GP, Consultant

Ophthalmologist, local society or Social Services for details of how the procedure works in your area.

Being registered does not necessarily mean that you will lose all your sight; nine out of 10 people who are registered have some useful sight.

Rehabilitation

There should be workers in your area whose job is to help people cope with the effects of losing their sight. These workers may be called social workers, rehabilitation officers, or mobility officers. All of them do similar work, which is to provide support, advice and some special equipment. These workers can help you learn skills such as new ways of making a cup of tea or making a phone call, or sometimes provide you with small pieces of equipment like talking watches or clocks.

Mobility

Most people with a sight problem find it relatively easy getting around in their own homes where everything is familiar to them. However, getting about out of doors can be harder. There may be people in your area who can give you mobility training, so that you can cross roads, do your shopping, catch buses and generally travel outdoors with confidence. For example, they may offer you a white cane. It is up to you whether you have one; however, a cane can help you to be safe outdoors and let others know that you may sometimes need help or a little more time. Ask your local Social Services team to assess your mobility needs as soon as you have a problem.

Guide dogs

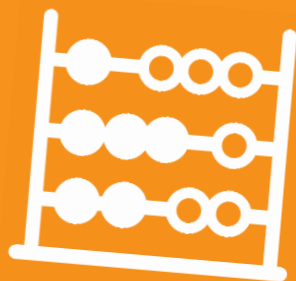
If you are 16 or over, reasonably fit and would like to go out by yourself regularly, you can apply to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association for a guide dog. If your application is accepted, you will be trained to use your dog safely and successfully.

Tel: 0118 983 5555

Web: www.guidedogs.org.uk



Children and parents



Action for Blind People run Actionnaires sports clubs providing a range of activities for blind and partially sighted children and young people, their siblings and friends. Visually impaired children and young people often miss out on physical activities provided for their fully sighted peers in school and there is rarely any activity adapted to their particular needs outside of school.

The Actionnaires clubs provide the opportunity for children and young people with a visual impairment to enjoy various activities in a fun, safe, and supported environment. They are able to learn new sporting skills, let off steam, improve their physical health and develop their social skills, under the supervision of trained coaches and instructors. Each Actionnaires club meets at different times, frequencies and locations. Contact Action for Blind People for the most up to date information.

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Email: actionnaires@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Contact a Family is a UK wide charity providing advice, information and support to the parents of disabled children, whatever their medical condition or disability. It also enables parents to get in contact with other families, both on a local and national basis.

Tel: 0808 808 3555

Web: www.cafamily.org.uk

Henshaws Society for Blind People supports families with children aged 0 to 19 years. It offers various social activities, including a Summer Holiday Club, Easter and Christmas activities and an 11 plus youth group. Families are also given the opportunity for a Family Support Officer to visit them at home. There are information forums, regular news updates and an information pack for parents.

Tel: 0161 872 1234

Web: www.hsbp.co.uk

LOOK provides information and practical help on all matters relating to visual impairment and youth. If your child has just been diagnosed as visually impaired, you are probably not sure where to go next. LOOK links families and young people in order to share experiences and give mutual support.

Tel: 0121 428 5038

Web: www.look-uk.org

The National Blind Children's Society helps visually impaired children and young adults up to the age of 25. It can provide grants for essential IT equipment and help

with the cost of recreational activities such as horse riding and music lessons.

Tel: 01278 764764

Web: www.nbcs.org.uk

The Royal London Society for the Blind (RLSB)

provides the highest quality educational and employment services for young people and adults who are blind or partially sighted from its bases in Sevenoaks and Willesden Junction. The RLSB runs Dorton House Nursery for youngsters aged two to five, Dorton House School for pupils aged five to 16 and Dorton College of Further Education for students aged 16 and over.

Tel: 01732 592500

Web: www.rlsb.org.uk

The RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind)

website 'Parent's Place' contains information on services for visually impaired children, including those with additional needs. It features news and articles about current issues and a message board where parents can contact one another.

RNIB has a network of 10 Family Services Officers across England who can help blind and partially sighted children and young people aged 0-19 years, and their families, access educational and social activities.

Tel: 0845 766 9999

Web: www.rnib.org.uk/parents

‘Teenagers!’ is a website for 13 to 18 year olds with a sight problem. Run by the RNIB, it provides information on leisure activities and advice on school work and equipment, and features a message board where young visually impaired people can make contacts and exchange messages.

Web: www.rnib.org.uk/teenagers

The RNIB Vacation Scheme is a programme of holidays designed specifically for blind and partially sighted children and young people, aged eight to 17 years, who attend mainstream schools and colleges in the UK.

Tel: 0113 274 8855

Web: www.rnib.org.uk/parents

Victa provides support to the families of visually impaired children and promotes children's rights to the education they need. Victa makes grants to individual children for equipment and services that will aid their education or social skills.

Tel: 01908 240831

Web: www.victa.org.uk

Vision Aid aims to offer practical help and advice to the families of visually impaired children throughout the UK. Children with additional needs are also welcome. The range of free services includes a resource centre, helpline, guidance on education and benefits, publications, library service for toys and books, weekly drop-in sessions, parent to parent contact, visual stimulation programmes, and equipment loans. The organisation also offers advice

to professionals working with visually impaired children.

Tel: 01204 64265

Web: www.visionaid.org.uk

Social Services Teams may provide services such as a child disability team, rehabilitation officers, equipment, or short term care. You will need to phone them to find out what is available in your area.

Books for visually impaired children

Bag Books sells tactile multi-sensory story packs specifically designed for children and young people with severe and multiple disabilities as well as for pre school mainstream children with a visual impairment.

Tel: 0207 627 0444

Web: www.bagbooks.org

Booktouch is a key part of the national Bookstart programme. Booktouch packs are for babies and children aged 0 to four years who have a visual impairment. Contact Bookstart for further information.

Tel: 0208 516 2995

Web: www.bookstart.co.uk

Calibre cassette library provides a postal lending library service to people who cannot read ordinary print books because of a sight problem or other physical disability. Most of the books are now also offered in MP3 digital disk format.

Young Calibre audio library offers children and young people with dyslexia or a physical disability the freedom to access books in many of formats, which include MP3 disk or cassette. The service is free to members. Young Calibre offers 7,000 titles, 1,000 of which are suitable for children.

Tel: 01296 432 339

Web: www.calibre.org.uk

ClearVision is a UK postal lending library of mainstream children's books with dual format Braille, Moon, tactile and printed books for visually impaired and sighted children and adults to share.

Tel: 020 8789 9575

Web: www.clearvisionproject.org

CustomEyes is a tailor made service to suit the individual requirements of each and every child. Children who have difficulty reading commercially available print can order books in large print prepared especially for their specific needs. For more information contact the National Blind Children's Society.

Tel: 01278 764764

Web: www.nbcs.org.uk

Listening Books provide audio books to children and adults who have difficulty reading or holding a book due to illness or disability. This service offers over 4,000 titles and support the national curriculum from Key Stage 2 to A-level. Reading material is available in a range of formats which include MP3 disks, cds and internet streaming.

Tel: 0207 407 9417

Web: www.listening-books.org.uk

Advice for visually impaired parents

Disabled Parents Network (DPN) is a national organisation of and for disabled people who are parents or who hope to become parents, and their families, friends and supporters.

Tel: 08702 410 450

Web: www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk

Disability, Pregnancy and Parenthood International

(DPPI) is a UK based charity for disabled people who are already parents and their families and those who wish to become parents. DPPI is currently running a project which aims to improve the quality and accessibility of information for visually impaired parents. Their guide 'Having a baby' covers issues relating to planning a baby, pregnancy, birth and early baby care.

Tel: 0800 018 4730

Web: www.dppi.org.uk

Education

Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are responsible for supporting visually impaired children in special or mainstream schools. The LEA's advisory teacher can answer your questions about Braille, mobility training and special equipment. The RNIB Helpline will give you their Education Information Service contact in your area and RNIB Customer Services can help with textbooks in Braille or on tape.

RNIB Helpline

Tel: 0845 766 9999

RNIB Customer Services

Tel: 0845 702 3153

Helpinsight is an online database of over 60 mainstream schools in the UK with special facilities for visually impaired children.

Web: www.helpinsight.org.uk

Toys and Games

Many familiar games come in versions specially designed to allow visually impaired people to play them with family members or friends. These games include Scrabble, chess, draughts, dominoes, Monopoly and word games like Lexis. You can also get quizzes on tape and on video. Games, puzzles and children's toys are available from RNIB Customer Services. The British Toy and Hobby Association and RNIB have produced a catalogue which recommends over 100 toys for blind and partially sighted children. This is also available from Customer Services in Braille, tape and large print formats. For further advice concerning choice of toys, contact

RNIB Customer Services

Tel: 0845 702 3153

Other suppliers

TFH (UK) designs and manufactures specialised play equipment. Call them for a catalogue or order one via their website. Spacekraft, ROMPA and The Sensory Company also provide leisure and play equipment for clients with special needs. Early Learning Centre has a wide range of toys and learning aids including books and games. They have stores nationwide; call them for details or visit their website.

Early Learning Centre

Tel: 0871 231 3511

Web: www.elc.co.uk

ROMPA

Tel: 0845 230 1177

Web: www.rompa.com

Spacekraft

Tel: 01274 581 007

Web: www.spacekraft.co.uk

The Sensory Company

Tel: 0845 838 22 33

Web: www.thesensorycompany.co.uk

TFH (UK)

Tel: 01299 827 820

Web: www.tfhuk.com

Azabat Software offers a range of easy to play games and educational games specifically designed for visually impaired children from Reception to Key Stage 2 and beyond, for the age group five to 11 year old and upwards.

Tel: 01442 251 091

Web: www.azabat.co.uk

Sense provide fact sheets in large print, audio, Braille and disk formats, listing suppliers of toys and equipment for deafblind children.

Tel: 0207 520 0999

Web: www.sense.org.uk

There are some accessible computer games available, as some companies have designed games with blind and partially sighted computer users in mind. Some of these games have been designed to work with specific screen readers or are self voicing. Others are mainstream games, which may be accessible to some partially sighted users.

The RNIB's Talk and Support offers an interesting range of telephone groups for people with sight loss. It is available via your telephone from the comfort of your home. Contact Talk and Support to get an update on the latest programmes and discussion groups currently available.

Tel: 0845 330 3723

Web: www.rnib.org.uk/talkandsupport

Benefits for children

If your child is visually impaired, you should claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is not based on your income and you do not pay tax on it, so you will always be better off claiming. If you get Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Tax Credit, you should get an extra allowance if your child is registered blind or eligible for DLA. See the section on 'Benefits and Entitlements' for more details. If your child is 16 or over they can claim benefits for themselves, even if they are at school or college. See Action for Blind People's fact sheet on 'Blind and Partially Sighted Young People and Students in Full time and Part time Education'.

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Employment and training



Losing your sight need not mean losing your job or limiting your career plans and opportunities. There is a wide range of services and help available to you.

Help in preparing for and finding a job

Many people who come to Action for Blind People to help them find work have been out of the employment market for some time and some have never had a job. So, preparing blind and partially sighted people for the world of work can take some time. Much of the ground work involves confidence building and the development of new skills.

Action for Blind People works on a one to one basis to prepare visually impaired people at a pace that they are comfortable with and to suit their particular needs.

Our Employment Coordinators provide a range of assessment, development and work experience opportunities to prepare visually impaired people for entry into employment.

Advice on keeping jobs in spite of sight loss

Many people choose to give up their jobs as soon as they start to lose their sight. Sometimes they are forced to leave as employers mistakenly believe that they are not fit to carry on. 74% of employers don't know that with minimal adjustments and financial support from the Government's Access to Work Scheme, someone who is losing their sight can remain a part of the workforce. Our aim is to inspire a culture of change with mainstream employers. Action's Employment Teams work with employees and employers to ensure that both parties receive the advice and support they need, so that employees retain their jobs while employers retain skilled and experienced staff.

Starting your own business

Action's Business Advisers offer a countrywide service. As members of the Institute of Business Counselling, they offer advice on self employment, business start up and business retention. This covers everything from marketing to full business start up, funding and grants.

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/help and advice

Department of Work and Pensions

Your local Jobcentre can tell you about the help available if you are looking for a job. They can also refer you to a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA). All DEAs report to the Jobcentre Manager; they are disability specialists, but not members of a specialist team. Their role is to tell you about the different services available from central

government, through Jobcentre Plus, to help you find training and or work. They can also call on services from voluntary organisations like Action for Blind People and the RNIB.

Access to Work

This government scheme provides practical support for disabled people at work, for example in the form of fares to work, equipment like access technology and support workers. This helps people with disabilities to keep their jobs once they are in employment. Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office or your nearest Action for Blind People team for more details.

Voluntary organisations

Dorton College of Further Education, run by RLSB, provides training courses, assessment services and work preparation programmes for adults.

Tel: 01732 592500

Web: www.rlsb.org.uk/college

Employment Opportunities is the national charity dedicated to creating routes into employment for people with all disabilities and medical conditions. It works nationally and locally with many groups, providing a wide variety of tailor made services for disabled people seeking work, including career advice, skills assessment, and access to local resource centres, together with support in job searching following work placements.

It's graduate programme is designed to provide specific help and advice to disabled students and graduates from all disciplines. It also provides services for employers, including individually tailored disability awareness training.

Web: www.opportunities.org.uk

Email: info@eopps.org

The Prince's Trust helps 18 to 30 year olds who want to set themselves up in business.

Tel: 0800 842842

Web: www.princes-trust.org.uk

The Royal National College for the Blind runs courses for unemployed, employed and self employed visually impaired people who want to update their skills and knowledge.

Tel: 01432 265725

Web: www.rncb.ac.uk

The RNIB Education and Employment Network can provide practical help advice, information and an assessment service. It has a number of regional employment education teams and a Technology Information Service, which produces fact sheets listing useful equipment.

Tel: 0845 766 9999

Web: www.rnib.org.uk

Technology Information Service

Tel: 0870 013 9555

The RNIB Vocational College

RNIB Vocational College offers courses to unemployed visually impaired people and has a strong reputation in the fields of IT and Business Administration. It has very close links with Loughborough University and because of this, extra support can be provided by the College to blind and partially sighted students who study at the University.

Tel: 01509 611 077

Web: www.rnibvocoll.ac.uk

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

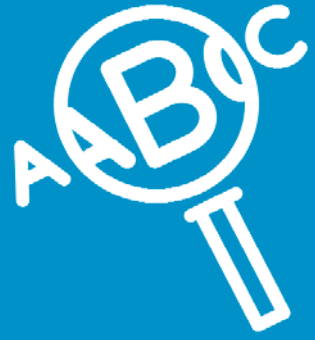
promotes opportunities for young people and adults in post 16 education, training and employment across the UK.

Tel: 0800 328 5050

Web: www.skill.org.uk



Equipment



Low Vision Aids and services

Most Low Vision Aids (LVAs) are magnifiers of one kind or another. They can be hand held or on stands, with built in lights or mounted on spectacles. They include small telescopes and binoculars. There are also machines called Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTVs) which use a TV camera to magnify print. Some CCTVs can be operated through your own TV set, or through a USB port connected to your own PC, laptop or notebook.

You may need different LVAs for different tasks. For reading, a hand-held magnifier with a built in light could be best. For seeing street signs and bus numbers, the small telescope might be useful. Using an LVA can take a little practice, and some simple training will probably help.

You can often get LVAs on free permanent loan from Low Vision Clinics through the Hospital Eye Service. Your eye specialist or GP can refer you to one of these. There will be an optician who can show you a range of magnifiers and how to use them. Any service provided outside a hospital or clinic may be private and, as LVAs can be

expensive, it is best to check beforehand what costs may be involved.

Household equipment and independent living

Most visually impaired people have some sight. Simple changes in your home, making use of size, light and colour contrast, can make it easier to cope. You can get advice on how to go about this from Action for Blind People, rehabilitation workers and the RNIB. There is a wide range of equipment available which can help you live independently. Some examples include talking clocks and watches and a range of kitchen equipment. This is either specially designed (there is an excellent range of goods available from the RNIB and Cobolt Systems Limited) or sometimes available from high street shops.

Action for Blind People

Information and advice on LVAs and services can be obtained via our Action Teams and National Freephone Helpline.

Action for Blind People's Mobile Sight Loss Information Service also carries a selection of high and low tech equipment which staff can demonstrate to you. The service visits locations throughout the UK. Contact **0800 915 4666** or visit **www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk** to find out if the service will be coming to your area.

Action for Blind People

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Cobolt Systems Ltd

Tel: 01493 700172

Web: www.cobolt.co.uk

RNIB

Tel: 0845 702 3153 (Customer Services)

High technology equipment

A range of assistive technology is available to help adapt your computer and make it more accessible. Simple changes, such as using large print keyboard stickers or a big key keyboard, are easily achieved. Adaptations also include software packages that magnify all the text on the screen and or packages that allow your computer to “read” information from the screen using an electronic voice. You can also purchase scanners that will scan documents, store them and read them back.

Suppliers of high technology equipment include:

Bierley. Suppliers of handheld CCTVs

Tel: 0800 0430 282

Web: www.bierley.com

Enhanced Vision Europe Limited

Supplier of innovative products to people with low vision

Tel: 0115 944 2317

Web: www.enhancedvision.co.uk

Forcetenco. Suppliers of technology for the Independent Living, Education and Employment of Low Sighted and Visually Impaired people

Tel: 01372 450 887

Web: www.forcetenco.co.uk

Humanware. Suppliers of a range of CCTVs and notetakers

Tel: 01933 415800

Web: www.humanware.com

Independent Living. Suppliers of a wide range of aids to enhance independent living

Tel: 01226 762 513

Web: www.ic-online.co.uk

Keytools Bigkeys. Suppliers of large print keyboard accessories and keyboards

Tel: 023 8029 4552

Web: www.keytools.co.uk

Optelec Tieman Group. Suppliers of a range of CCTVs and Braille products

Tel: 01923 231313

Web: www.optelec.co.uk

Optima Low Vision Services. Suppliers of LVAs, magnifiers, lamps and other products

Tel: 01803 864 218

Web: www.optimalowvision.co.uk

The Partially Sighted Society. Suppliers of low vision equipment

Tel: 0844 477 4966

Email: info@partsight.org.uk

Sight and Sound Technology. Suppliers of software and scanners

Tel: 0845 634 7979

Web: www.sightandsound.co.uk

Videospec Limited. Suppliers of reading aids

Tel: 01483 728 343

Web: www.videospec.co.uk

The cost of buying this equipment or adapting your own system will depend on your eyesight and what you want to do. Second hand equipment is sometimes available and can reduce costs greatly. However, before you buy any equipment, look around for the equipment best suited to your needs. There are various centres and displays where you can get 'hands on' experience and independent advice. For example, you can contact your local society for blind and partially sighted people, which may have its own resource centre, or the RNIB Resource Centre or AbilityNet.

AbilityNet

Tel: 0800 269545

Web: www.abilitynet.org.uk

RNIB Resource Centre

Tel: 020 7391 2356

Mobile phones can also be made accessible through speech or magnification software. The RNIB produces a fact sheet on accessible phones.



Money



Benefits

Action for Blind People

Our highly experienced team is able to advise you on all issues relating to social security benefits, together with advice, tips and hints about filling in forms and disputing decisions. We also have information about local services who may be able to complete forms on your behalf and go with you to appeals.

Action for Blind People provides fact sheets on the following:

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Disability Living Allowance for children

DLA is for people who are under 65 and who have care needs or mobility problems. DLA is not means tested, you do not have to pay tax on it and it can be paid on top of any other benefits you get. You can get DLA if you are in work, out of work, or in full time education. Most visually impaired people will get both the care component and the mobility component, although an application for the mobility component cannot be made for a child under three. See our fact sheets 'Disability Living Allowance'

and 'Disability Living Allowance for blind and partially sighted children'.

Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance is for people who are over 65 and who have care or supervision needs. You do not have to pay tax on Attendance Allowance and you can claim it on top of your pension and any other benefits you get (although you cannot claim Attendance Allowance if you already get DLA). See our 'Attendance Allowance' fact sheet.

Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)

Income based JSA is for people who are under 60 and looking for work. Entitlement is means-tested, and you may be able to get premiums to increase your benefit if you have a disability or you have a child with a disability. For more information go to www.direct.gov.uk and search for 'income-based JSA'.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

ESA is a benefit for people who are unable to work because they are sick or disabled. There are two types of ESA, income based and contribution based. Entitlement to income based ESA is means tested. Entitlement to contribution based ESA depends on your national insurance contribution record.

If you are under 25 and have not made national insurance contributions you may still be able to qualify for the contribution based version in certain circumstances.

See our fact sheets ‘Employment and Support Allowance’ and ‘Young People in Full time Education’.

Pension Credit

Pension Credit is for people aged 60 or over. Entitlement is means tested. There are two types of Pension Credit, ‘guarantee credit’ and ‘savings credit’. The guarantee credit tops up your income to a guaranteed minimum level. If your income is already above this guaranteed minimum, you cannot qualify for the guarantee credit but may be able to get some savings credit instead. You must be 65 or over to qualify for savings credit. You can get allowances to increase your guaranteed minimum level if you receive disability benefits and you live alone, or if your partner is your carer. See our ‘Pension Credit’ fact sheet.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

If you are on a low income, you can claim Housing Benefit if you pay rent to a landlord and Council Tax Benefit if you are responsible for paying Council Tax. Entitlement to both these benefits is means tested, and you may be able to get premiums to increase your benefit if you have a disability or you have a child with a disability. See our fact sheet ‘Housing and Council Tax Benefit’.

Child Tax Credit

If you have children under 16, or under 20 and still in full time, non advanced education or approved training, you can claim Child Tax Credit. Entitlement is means tested, and you get an ‘element’ for each child. You may be able

to get extra 'elements' if you have a child with a disability. Call the Tax Credit helpline on 0845 300 3900 for further information, and see our fact sheet 'Tax Credits'.

Working Tax Credit

You can claim Working Tax Credit if you work and are on a low wage. Entitlement to Working Tax Credit is means tested, and you may be able to get 'elements' to increase your entitlement if you have a disability. Call the Tax Credit helpline on 0845 300 3900 for further information, and see our 'Tax Credits' fact sheet.

Carer's Allowance

If you are looking after a disabled person who is getting Attendance Allowance or the middle or higher rate care component of DLA, you may be able to get Carer's Allowance for yourself. You must be providing care for at least 35 hours per week. If you are claiming another benefit, earning over a set amount a week (after expenses), or in full time education, you may not get Carer's Allowance. See our 'Carer's Allowance' fact sheet.

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

If you have lost your sight as a result of an injury or disease caused by your job, you can claim a benefit under the industrial injuries scheme. The amount of benefit you receive depends on how disabled you are. For more information go to www.direct.gov.uk and search for 'Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit'.

Health Benefits

If you are on a low income, you may not have to pay charges for prescriptions, dental treatment, sight tests, glasses, fares to hospital, wigs and fabric supports. If you are not on a low income, you may not have to pay these charges in certain situations. For example, if you are aged 60 or over, or registered as blind (severely sight impaired) or partially sighted (sight impaired), you will get free sight tests. If you have a disability which prevents you from leaving home without the help of another person you can get free prescriptions. Ask your local social security office for leaflet HC11 'Are you entitled to help with health costs?' Also see our fact sheet 'Health Benefits'.

Community Care Grants (CCGs)

If you get income-based Jobseekers Allowance or income based Employment and Support Allowance you can apply for a CCG to cover one-off costs such as furniture or clothing. Blind and partially sighted people are considered as a priority. You can also apply for a CCG to help with the cost of transport to hospital. See our 'Community Care Grants' fact sheet.

For more information and advice about benefits contact your local Jobcentre Plus office or Citizens Advice Bureau. For specialist advice about benefits for people with a visual impairment, you can contact Action for Blind People's Welfare Rights Service, the RNIB's helpline or you can ring the DWP's Benefits Enquiry Line.

Action for Blind People
DWP Benefits Enquiry Line
RNIB Welfare Rights

Tel: 0800 915 4666
Tel: 0800 882200
Tel: 0845 766 9999

Entitlements

As well as benefits, there are several entitlements which you may be able to claim, as follows:

Blind Person's Tax Allowance

If you are registered blind (severely sight impaired) and pay income tax, you are entitled to an addition to your personal tax allowance. This does not apply to those who are registered partially sighted (sight impaired). Contact your local tax office to apply. You can search for contact details for your tax office on the HMRC webpage (www.hmrc.gov.uk) under the heading 'Contact us'.

Council Tax Disability Reduction

If you have a room set aside for equipment such as a Braille, computer equipment, CCTV or tape recorder, or an indoor space for your guide dog, you may get your Council Tax Bill reduced under this scheme. See our 'Council Tax Disability Reduction Scheme' briefing.

TV Licence Concession

If you are registered blind (severely sight impaired), you are entitled to a 50 percent reduction in your TV licence fee. Anyone over 75 is entitled to a free licence.

Tel: 0870 241 6468

Blue Badge Scheme

This national scheme offers on street parking allowances to disabled people, including people who are registered as blind (severely sight impaired), but not partially sighted (sight impaired). It does not apply to off street car parks, although private landowners often provide concessions to badge holders. You can get an application form from your local Social Services team. There is a small administration charge and you need to include two passport size photographs with your form. If the application is successful, Social Services will give you a disc for the car windscreen. You do not have to be the registered owner of the car, but the driver must only display the disc and use the allowances when you are travelling with them.

Blue Badge holders are eligible for a 100 percent discount on the Central London congestion charge. You will need to make a one-off payment of £10 to register for this discount. For further details contact Transport for London.

Tel: 0845 900 1234

Web:

www.cclondon.com/download/DisabledPeople.pdf

Free bus pass

If you are registered partially sighted (sight impaired) or blind (severely sight impaired), or aged 60 or over, you are entitled to free off peak travel on all local buses anywhere in England. Contact your local authority for an application form.

Help with paying the bills

There may be times when you need money for things that social security and social services cannot help with, for example, an important piece of equipment, a holiday or to improve your education. Or perhaps you just cannot meet your everyday expenses. There are organisations that may be able to help. Some of these organisations are small and serve a local area. Our National Freephone Helpline will be able to give you more information regarding grants.

Some organisations that could be contacted regarding possible grants are as follow:

Cecilia Charitable Trust

Tel: 020 7253 3757

Gardner's Trust for the Blind

Tel: 020 7253 3757

Royal Blind Society

Tel: 01903 857023

Turn-2-us

Web: www.turn2us.org.uk

Each of these organisations has its own criteria and procedures. Many will ask you to apply on a special form and may need your application to be supported by a rehabilitation officer, a social worker or another independent person.

Debt Advice Service

The RNIB offers a debt advice service in partnership with Citizen's Advice Bureau specifically for face-to-face debt advice. The service is situated in 10 National areas including London and aims to offer debt managing advice to visually impaired people. For more information contact the RNIB Advice Service.

Tel: 0845 766 9999

Web: www.rnib.org.uk - to find advice regarding the above - type debt into the search engine.



Housing



Action for Blind People

Action's Housing Service is designed to help visually impaired people live in the home of their choice, as independently as possible. Our Housing Coordinators are trained to help people understand their rights, and advise them of practical solutions to any problems they may be experiencing.

Whether someone owns or rents their home, or lives with someone else, or are homeless, or at risk from losing their home, Action for Blind People can help.

We also work with housing providers and other professionals to help them understand the impact of sight loss and the additional barriers to independence it creates.

Tel: 0800 915 4666 (National Freephone Helpline)

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Supported housing

In supported housing, independent flats or bungalows are linked to a warden by an alarm system and intercom. There may also be rooms which residents share (for

example a lounge, laundry room or dining room). This type of housing may be provided by your local council, a housing association, or a private developer. Usually, supported housing is not designed specifically for visually impaired people, but some national voluntary organisations do provide specialist accommodation. Action for Blind People has Swail House in Surrey and Bradbury Oak House in south east London.

The Thomas Pocklington Trust has flats in London, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Plymouth. Some local voluntary organisations also provide supported housing.

Action for Blind People

Bradbury Oak House

Tel: 020 8693 7400

Swail House

Tel: 01372 720742

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Thomas Pocklington Trust

Tel: 020 8995 0880

Web: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

Residential care

If you need more support than supported housing provides, you may want to consider a residential care home or nursing home (nursing homes must have a trained nurse on duty day and night). Our National Helpline team can help you to find information about homes in your area.

Help in dealing with housing problems

Action for Blind People

Sometimes things go wrong in our homes and we may struggle to find a solution. Action for Blind People's Housing Coordinators are trained to help blind and partially sighted people to understand their rights and find practical solutions to housing problems they may face.

Our leaflet 'Do you have sight loss? Are you experiencing housing problems?' gives you information about ways we can help.

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk



Consumer services



There are many service providers who will value your custom and will make adjustments to ensure that you are able to use their services effectively. Under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), service providers must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that visually impaired people can use their services. This means that things such as statements or bills should be provided in alternative formats such as tape, Braille or large print.

However, many service providers go beyond this and provide extra services for their visually impaired customers and details of these are found below.

Banking

Many high street banks have telephone banking facilities through which you can find out your balance and recent transactions. They will also offer signature guides that make it easier to sign for cheques. You can get further details on these and other services by contacting your bank directly.

For those who find Chip and PIN too difficult to use, there is a service called “Chip and Signature” which allows you to continue to sign for anything you purchase by card. More information about this can be found at www.chipandpin.co.uk or by contacting Action for Blind People **0800 915 4666**, or your bank.

Gas and electricity

Both British Gas and E.ON offers a number of services to their customers, including free gas safety checks and password schemes for home visits. They will send someone to read the meter if you cannot and British Gas offer to move it to somewhere which is more visible. Contact their Service Liaison Departments for more information about these and other services.

British Gas Home Energy Care

Tel: 0845 955 5404

E.ON

Tel: 0800 051 1480

Energy Watch (the gas and electricity watchdog) produces a range of fact sheets on energy suppliers and using gas and energy safely, which are available on tape, in large print and in Braille. To obtain copies, contact the Energy Watch Helpline.

Tel: 0845 906 0708

Web: www.energywatch.org.uk

Some manufacturers can also arrange to put control panels in Braille (for example, for washing machines and tumble dryers). If you are interested in this service, please contact the RNIB's Customer Services Department.

Tel: 0845 702 3153

The Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (Ricability) and 'Which' (the Consumers Association) also produce information which may help you to choose a suitable appliance.

Ricability

Tel: 020 7427 2460

Web: www.ricability.org.uk

Which

Tel: 020 7770 7000

Telephones

BT produces a guide for older and disabled people called "Communication Solutions", which gives details of their latest products and services. A free copy of this guide can be requested, which is available in Braille, large print and audio CD by calling BT. BT also has a range of products, such as large button phones, that might be of use to you.

A nationwide network of 'Try Before You Buy' centres, set up in partnership with third party suppliers, provides locations where you can see, handle and try out products before you buy them to make sure they suit your needs. A list of locations can be found at www.bt.com/inclusion.

BT provides bills on a multi format CD which can be played on a variety of devices; visually impaired customers can apply for a free directory enquiry service which is accessed by ringing 195. BT customers who are registered for this service also receive free last number call back by ringing 1471 then pressing 3. The cost of the call remains the same but you will not be charged for using this service. To register for these services call 195.

Tel: 0800 800 150

Web: www.bt.com/inclusion

Postal service

Royal Mail Customer Care

Articles for the Blind is a service offered by Royal Mail to blind (severely sight impaired) or partially sighted (sight impaired) people; proof may be necessary, from a doctor, ophthalmologist or ophthalmic optician. It allows specified letters and parcels to be sent first class post, free of charge. This includes Braille and Moon, talking books, talking newspapers, and large print items (over 16 point font). For more information about this service contact the Royal Mail Customer Care department.

Tel: 0845 774 0740



Transport



Rail travel

The National Rail Enquiries Line can provide useful information on relevant rail companies and journeys.

Tel: 08457 48 49 50

Virgin Trains Journey Care Disability Needs can advise on individual station facilities and arrange your travel details with the particular railway operating company. It is important to note that if you use Journey Care Disability Needs it will take four clear working days to process tickets and 24 hours notice to arrange assistance.

Tel: 0845 744 3366

Disabled Persons Railcard

If you are registered blind (severely sight impaired) or partially sighted (sight impaired), you can get a Disabled Persons Railcard. For further information, contact the Disabled Persons Railcard Office. They can offer information on tape or in large print. The Disabled Persons Railcard entitles you to discounts off most ticket prices. Fill in an application form (available from your local station) and apply by post with proof of your registration and your

payment (cheque, postal order or credit card number). When you buy a ticket it is worth asking if your railcard will give you the cheapest fare for your journey as some advance tickets may be better value.

Tel: 0845 605 0525

Web: www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

If you do not have a railcard, you are still eligible for rail discounts if you are registered as sight impaired and are travelling with a companion. These discounts are only available on Standard tickets. Full details are available in the 'Rail Travel for Disabled Passengers' booklet, available from staffed railway stations and from the National Rail website.

Web: www.nationalrail.co.uk

Bus travel

Bus fares and discounts vary from area to area. Check with your local council and ask if there are any reductions for a companion.

Taxi travel

London Taxicard Token Schemes are available in some areas. Contact your local authority for further details.

Tel: 020 7484 2929

Web: www.taxicard.org.uk

Community transport

Dial a Ride

There may be a community transport scheme in your

area through which you can book a car or bus to pick you up and take you to your destination. For more information about these schemes contact your Social Services team or local society for blind people.

Blue Badge Scheme

This national scheme offers on street parking allowances to disabled people, including people who are registered as blind (severely sight impaired), but not partially sighted (sight impaired). It does not apply to off street car parks, although private landowners often provide concessions to badge holders. You can get an application form from your local Social Services team. There is a small administration charge and you need to include two passport size photographs with your form. If the application is successful, Social Services will give you a disc for the car windscreen. You do not have to be the registered owner of the car, but the driver must only display the disc and use the allowances when you are travelling with them.

Blue Badge holders are eligible for a 100 percent discount on the Central London Congestion Charge. You will need to make a one off payment of £10 to register for this discount.

For further details contact Transport for London.

Tel: 0845 900 1234

Web: www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/MotoringAndTransport/DG-4001061

Pets Travel Scheme for guide dog owners

This allows British residents and people travelling to the UK from overseas to bring in their pet cats and dogs as long as specific criteria are met. For guide dog owners this means that visually impaired people can choose to take their guide dogs abroad to the various qualifying countries. Check with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) or your veterinary surgeon for the latest information before travelling.

Tel: 0870 241 1710

Web: www.defra.gov.uk

Travel expenses to hospital

The RNIB produces a fact sheet, 'NHS Costs', that explains how you can make a claim for refund of travel expenses for yourself or someone you travel with, when attending hospital for NHS treatment. This help is only available to people on a low income.

RNIB Helpline: 0845 766 9999



Leisure



Sport

Action for Blind People run Actionnaires sports clubs providing a range of activities for blind and partially sighted children and young people, their siblings and friends. Visually impaired children and young people often miss out on physical activities provided for their fully sighted peers in school and there is rarely any activity adapted to their particular needs outside of school.

The Actionnaires clubs provide the opportunity for children and young people with a visual impairment to enjoy various activities in a fun, safe, and supported environment. They are able to learn new sporting skills, let off steam, improve their physical health and develop their social skills, under the supervision of trained coaches and instructors. Each Actionnaires club meets at different times, frequencies and locations. Call Action for Blind People for the most up to date information.

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Email: actionnaires@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

British Blind Sport

You do not need to give up sport if you are having trouble with your eyesight. British Blind Sport can put you in touch with a local club or contact for whatever sport you want to take part in - for example, bowls, cricket, football, judo, archery, golf.

Tel: 01926 424 247

Web: www.britishblindsport.org.uk

Gardening

Thrive is a national charity which aims to change the lives of disabled people through gardening. It provides information and practical support to enable people to continue to enjoy gardening.

Tel: 0118 988 5688

Web: www.thrive.org.uk

Chess

The Braille Chess Association encourages and supports the playing of chess by blind and partially sighted people throughout the United Kingdom. Their services include postal chess, tournaments, advice on chess and an active website.

Tel: 0114 2305995

Web: www.braillechess.org.uk

Social clubs

Action for Blind People

There are local societies for visually impaired people throughout the country. Many of them run social clubs and organise a variety of activities. As well as being fun, these

give you a chance to meet other people and discuss common problems. For more information, contact our National Helpline Team.

Tel: 0800 915 4666

Your local Social Services team or Age Concern group may run luncheon clubs or day centres near to you. In many cases door to door transport can be arranged. Sometimes you may have to pay a small charge.

Age Concern:

Tel: 0800 00 99 66

Web: www.ageconcern.org.uk

Books and libraries

If you cannot read print, there is now a wide range of recorded material available to you.

Calibre

A lot of material is produced on standard cassettes and MP3 digital disk. Specialist libraries such as Calibre offer a postal library service. Your local public library is likely to have a wide range of talking books and may provide a mobile delivery or postal service. Contact your local library to find out what services they offer.

Tel: 01296 432339

Web: www.calibre.org.uk

RNIB Talking Books service

The RNIB Talking Books service offers a wide selection of books for an annual subscription. Your local authority may

pay for this either through Social Services or through their library service. If you need more information on this, the Talking Books team at the RNIB can advise you. The books are produced on disc in DAISY format which makes books easy to navigate. The RNIB has a huge selection of over 14,000 books and your subscription will include the loan of a DAISY player if you don't own one.

Tel: 0845 762 6843

There are a number of shops that sell spoken cassettes. Magna Story Sound offers a range of titles. Call them for a catalogue. The Talking Bookshop offers a selection of bestsellers, new releases and non-fiction books. Listening Books is a postal book club that has thousands of audio titles for adults, children, hospitals and schools.

Listening Books

Tel: 020 7234 0522

Web: www.listening-books.org.uk

Magna Story Sound

Tel: 01729 840 225

The Audiobook Store

Tel: 020 7486 7040

Web: www.audiobooks.co.uk

Public libraries stock large print books. They are not usually displayed in bookshops, but can be bought directly from publishers, who will supply catalogues. Ulverscroft and Magna offer a wide selection of titles for adults.

Children's stockists include National Blind Children's Society Large Print Books. You can even get large print crosswords and wordsearch books from SW (Retail) Limited.

Magna

Tel: 01729 840 225

National Blind Children's Society

Tel: 01278 764764

SW (Retail) Limited

Tel: 01226 762513

Web: www.swretail.co.uk

Ulverscroft

Tel: 0116 236 4325

Web: www.ulverscroft.co.uk

Newspapers

Nearly every area in the country is covered by a local talking newspaper. Your Social Services team, local society for visually impaired people or public library will be able to give you details. You can get national daily and Sunday newspapers and national magazines from the Talking Newspaper Association of the UK (TNAUK). TNAUK produces a guide to tape services, giving details of all talking newspapers, magazines and tape libraries. Also, a large number of newspapers and magazines are available as electronic texts readable via a computer. You can get access to them via floppy disc, bulletin board, email,

website, CD ROM or DAISY. Contact TNAUK to find out which publications are available in the different formats.

Tel: 01435 866102

Web: www.tnauk.org.uk

There is also a weekly large print newspaper, 'Big Print'.

Tel: 0800 124 007

Web: www.big-print.co.uk

Talking Magazines

Livewire is a monthly talking magazine aimed at younger listeners from the nine to 16 year old range. As well as being mailed to individuals, Livewire is sent to many schools and colleges for fast copying. This talking magazine is made with the input of a local school for visually impaired sixth form pupils. Livewire contains a wide range of light hearted items, from transcribed articles out of popular teen magazines to music and film reviews. It also features more serious issues that are particularly relevant to young people such as peer group pressure and drug and alcohol abuse.

Tel: 01274 848 150

Theatre and cinema

Several theatres and cinemas around the country offer audio description, which gives you a verbal commentary on scenery, costumes, facial expressions and action in the breaks between the characters speaking. VOCALEYES provides a nationwide audio description service for touring theatre shows. Call them or visit their website for a schedule of current performances. Contact the RNIB

Broadcasting Team for a list of cinemas currently offering audio description. Some concert venues and theatres also provide audio versions of their printed programmes. Some also offer discounted tickets to disabled patrons and one companion.

RNIB Broadcasting and Talking Images

Tel: 0845 766 9999

VOCAL EYES

Tel: 020 7375 1043

Web: www.vocaley.es.co.uk

The Cinema Exhibitors' Association Card entitles the holder to one free ticket for a person accompanying them to the cinema. Cards are valid for three years and to apply you need to be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, be registered blind or have a Disabled Person's Railcard. There is a small charge for the card.

Tel: 0845 123 1292

Web: www.ceacard.co.uk

Video and TV

The RNIB Home Video Service offers audio described videos to rent and buy. Contact Customer Services for a copy of the catalogue. This is available in large print, in Braille and on tape. Many television programmes now come with audio description available through SKY or Freeview. For further information on audio described television and home video services, contact a member of the RNIB Broadcasting team. The RNIB also produces a

leaflet which explains audio description and how it works on television, at the cinema, at sports venues and in museums. For information about Sky's Audio Narrative Channel, contact Sky's Special Needs Helpline. From 2012, TV services in the UK will be completely digital. Digital UK offers assistance during this Digital Switchover. For more information contact Digital UK directly or visit their website.

Digital UK:

Tel: 0845 650 5050

Web: www.digitaluk.co.uk

RNIB Customer Services:

Tel: 0845 702 3153

RNIB Broadcasting and Talking Images:

Tel: 0845 766 9999

Sky Special Needs Helpline:

Tel: 0844 2410 333

Places to visit

Many museums, galleries and visitor attractions are fully accessible and offer audio guides or guides in alternative formats. Many venues will hold touch tours or descriptive talks. Contact venues directly for further information and details of forthcoming events.

Living Paintings brings pictures to life for blind and partially sighted adults, young people and children. For more

information contact Living Paintings directly.

Tel: 01635 299 771

Web: www.livingpaintings.org

Holidays

There are several hotels catering specifically for blind and partially sighted holidaymakers and their companions.

They are run by various organisations including Action for Blind People and the Royal Blind Society.

Action for Blind People

Set in some of Britain's most beautiful countryside, Action for Blind People's hotels are ideally located for relaxing breaks, seaside fun, or active holidays. From the bustling seaside resorts of the South Coast, to the wilds of the English Lake District, our hotels provide the best in hospitality and comfort.

Action's quality specialist hotels offer first class cuisine and a wide range of leisure activities and entertainment. The choice is yours from country houses to coastal hotels. The staff are trained to understand the needs and expectations of guests with various sight conditions and work to ensure that you have a thoroughly enjoyable holiday every time.

Tel: National Freephone Number 0800 915 4666

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Royal Blind Society

Tel: 01903 857023

Belmont Hotel, Llandudno

Tel: 01492 877770

Bradbury Hotel, West Sussex

Tel: 01903 770339

RNIB

RNIB has produced a hotel guide which includes details of mainstream hotels and guesthouses recommended by blind and partially sighted people. The guide includes information on accessibility and facilities and is available from RNIB Customer Services.

Tel: 0845 702 3153

Traveleyes

Traveleyes provides holidays for both visually impaired and sighted travellers.

Tel: 08448 040 221

Web: www.traveleyes.co.uk

Tourism for All

Tourism for All offers a free information and support service regarding holidays in this country and abroad.

Tel: 0845 124 9971

Web: www.tourismforall.org.uk

Vitalise

Vitalise caters for all visually impaired people and includes touring, educational, activity and leisure holidays, both in Britain and abroad.

Tel: 0845 330 0149

Web: www.vitalise.org.uk



Your rights



The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 was introduced to reduce discrimination against disabled people. It gives people with disabilities rights in the following areas:

- employment
- goods and services
- buying or renting land and property.

The Act was introduced over a period of time. Education services have been covered since September 2002. In 2004 a number of changes came into force:

- the Act applied to employers of less than 15 people
- organisations are required to have plans in place to make the physical features of a building accessible
- organisations are required to have plans in place to provide greater access to a service, e.g. having information available online, by email, in Braille and large print or on tape and CD.

A court of law or a tribunal may not think it is reasonable for an employer and service provider to make all these adjustments.

If you feel that you are being discriminated against because of your disability, you can take legal action based on the DDA. People with disabilities will usually bring their own cases, apart from a very small number of instances where the Human Rights Commission may be willing to support the case.

Those cases relating to employment must be brought to an industrial tribunal within three months from the time when the incident occurred. Those relating to the provision of goods, services and premises must be brought to the county court within six months. In both cases the tribunal or court can award compensation.

You might find you can get a satisfactory result through direct contact, without recourse to the county court system. Evidence that an individual is registered as blind or partially sighted will be taken as proof of disability.

Additionally, the RNIB has DDA workers and qualified legal officers, who may be able to help you prepare your case and again, in a very small number of instances, they may be prepared to support your case directly.

Alternatively, you could contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Human Rights Commission Helpline:

Tel: 0845 604 6610

Web: www.equalityhumanrights.com

RNIB Helpline: 0845 766 9999



Information and support



Finding out you have a sight problem can sometimes be an isolating experience. Many people find it helpful to talk to someone else who has the same eye condition or has experience in dealing with sight loss. Here are some of the groups you can contact:

Action for Blind People is a national charity that provides free and confidential support for blind and partially sighted people in all aspects of their lives.

Tel: National Freephone Number 0800 915 4666

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Age Concern provides help and advice on a range of services for older people and can provide information on your local Age Concern group.

Age Concern England 020 8765 7200

Age Concern Scotland 0845 833 0200

Age Concern Northern Ireland 028 9024 5729

Age Concern Cymru (Wales) 029 20 431555

Information Line 0800 009966

Albinism Fellowship:

Tel: 01282 771900

Web: www.albinism.org.uk

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy can provide a list of qualified counsellors in your area.

Tel: 0870 443 5219

Web: www.bacp.co.uk

British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society:

Tel: 0845 123 2354

Web: www.brps.org.uk

Deafblind UK operates a free 24 hour helpline providing support and information to deafblind people and their carers.

Tel: 0800 132 320

Web: www.deafblind.org.uk

Diabetes UK:

Tel: 020 7424 1000

Web: www.diabetes.org.uk

The Dystonia Society:

Tel: 0845 458 6211

Web: www.dystonia.org.uk

International Glaucoma Association:

Tel: 0870 609 1870

Web: www.glaucoma-association.com

The Listening Eye is a national helpline for anyone with a sight problem, and their carers, open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Tel: 0800 783 1979

Macular Disease Society:

Tel: 0845 241 2041

Web: www.maculardisease.org

Nystagmus Network:

Tel: 0845 634 2630

Web: www.nystagmusnet.org

One Vision is a charity dedicated to helping people through the experience of sight loss in one eye.

Tel: 0845 108 3161

Web: www.one-vision.org.uk

The Partially Sighted Society offers support to anyone with some remaining vision.

Tel: 0844 477 4966

RNIB produces fact sheets on many eye conditions and offers wide ranging support and information.

Tel: RNIB Helpline: 0845 766 9999

Web: www.rnib.org.uk

Shelter provides a free and impartial advice on housing problems.

Tel: 0808 800 4444

Some local visual impairment societies provide a befriending service. For more information please contact them.

Useful addresses:

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

Burghfield Common

Reading

RG7 3YG

Tel: 0118 983 5555

Web: www.guidedogs.org.uk

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)

105 Judd Street

London

WC1H 9NE

Tel: 0845 766 9999

Web: www.rnib.org.uk

This booklet gives a brief summary of the main services and benefits you may be entitled to. If you need more advice, please contact Action for Blind People at:

Action for Blind People

14-16 Verney Road

London SE16 3DZ

Tel: National Freephone Helpline 0800 915 4666

Email: info@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Web: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

**This publication is available in alternative formats.
It is also downloadable from our website, or we
can send you a copy by email.**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Action for blind people

Registered Charity no: 205913 (England and Wales) SC040050 (Scotland)