Information Pack for Children with Vision Impairment in Buckinghamshire

Services provided by:

**Amersham Hospital**, Whielden Street, Amersham HP7 0JD

**Milton Keynes General Hospital**, Standing Way, Eaglestone, Milton Keynes MK65LD

**Stoke Mandeville Hospital**, Mandeville Road, Aylesbury HP21 8AL

**Wycombe Hospital**, Queen Alexandra Road, High Wycombe HP11 2TT
Introduction

This is a comprehensive package, containing a lot of useful information, but please be aware that not all of the information may be relevant to your child. You may wish to read all or only part of this pack depending on your child’s needs.

Once your child has been diagnosed as having a visual disability you may not know what to do next. This pack is designed to answer some common questions and to guide you towards the most appropriate help.

Initially, you may want to know more about the diagnosis and outcome, and may find it difficult to remember what was said during the consultation. Make a list of the things you wish to discuss so that you do not forget them and take this with you to your next appointment. You may also find it helpful to take a friend or relative with you.

Pack Contents

Page 3    The Hospital Ophthalmic Team
Page 4    Optical Aids – Spectacles and Low Vision Aids
Page 5-6    Help Available in the Community
                        GP and Health Visitor
                        Rehabilitation Officer for the visually impaired
                        Bucks Association for the Blind
                        Qualified Teacher for the visually impaired
Page 7    Education and Statementing process
                        Vision Impairment Registration
Page 8    Educational Considerations for Children with Vision Impairment.
Page 9-10    Benefits for Children with Vision Impairment
Page 11-12    Support Groups / Organisations
Page 13    Extra copy for your child’s teacher of Educational Considerations for Children with Vision Impairment
The Hospital Ophthalmic Team

You may meet one or all of the following professionals

Ophthalmologist

An Ophthalmologist (medical doctor specialising in eyes) will be responsible for diagnosing any problems with the eyes or the visual system and monitoring any changes. They will be able to discuss treatment options e.g. spectacles or surgery and what to expect in the future.
The Consultant Ophthalmologist has the ultimate responsibility for patients under their care and decides whether your child would benefit from being registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired (see information later).

Orthoptist

The Orthoptist specialises in measuring children’s vision. They will look at your child’s ability to co-ordinate their eyes and assess 3D vision and can advise on treatment options.
If you wish to be seen by the same Orthoptist each visit you may request this at your next appointment and where possible this will be done.

Orthoptic Department - Telephone numbers
AH 01494 434336
MK 01908 660033 x 2243
WH 01494 425480
SMH 01296 315719

Optometrist

The Optometrist is responsible for testing your child for spectacles. If required a spectacle prescription will be issued. Optical low vision aids can also be issued if necessary. Optometrists will help with eye training to make the best use of available vision.

Optometry Department – Telephone numbers
AH 01494 425871
MK 01908 660033 x 2829
WH 01494 425871
SMH 01296 315929

The Orthoptic and Optometry departments have good links with the teachers for the visually impaired and rehabilitation officers.
Optical Aids

Spectacles
If your child has been issued with a prescription for spectacles the Optometrist will advise on when they should be worn. The spectacle prescription form contains a voucher which can be taken to a qualified Dispensing Optician or Optometrist at a high street Opticians and will help pay for the spectacles.

If the spectacles are lost or broken you should return to the Optician who made them. They will use a pink “repair and replacement” form to mend or replace the spectacles. During this time, your child may be without spectacles if they do not have a spare pair. Spare pairs are not issued automatically. Please ask your Optometrist if your child is entitled to a spare pair.

The spectacle prescription is usually checked at least once a year by the Optometrist

Low Vision Aids (LVA)

Optical low vision aids provide magnification either for near or distance tasks e.g. reading or looking at the white board. These are usually hand held devices but can be mounted on spectacles.

Non-Optical aids such as lighting adaptations and desk props will be discussed.

Electronic Aids may be provided by the Local Education Authority.

Low Vision Aid assessments will be carried out by an Optometrist. They will assess your child’s needs and provide magnification as necessary.

Optical aids are usually supplied on loan from the hospital and exchanged if they are no longer appropriate. Your child will receive a regular check with the hospital Optometrist to ensure that their low visual aids are up to date.

Children should be assessed before they start school – some children may benefit from a simple aid as early as 3 years old
Help Available in the Community

**GP and Health Visitor**
You can contact your GP and Health Visitor to tell them about the diagnosis. Although they may not be able to answer your questions they can introduce you to people who can help. The ophthalmologist will write to your GP giving information about the diagnosis and plans about future hospital appointments.

**Rehabilitation Officer for the Visually Impaired**
This is a qualified worker who works predominantly in the community. Their work includes providing advice and information on eye conditions, equipment and the services available both locally and nationally. They also provide training in alternative skills and strategies to enable the completion of everyday tasks (e.g. making hot drinks, getting out and about) and they assist the individual in becoming and / or remaining as independent as they wish.

**Buckinghamshire Rehabilitation Service**
The visual impairment service in Bucks is provided by Bucks Association for Blind and Partially Sighted People (BAB). The staff are based at the BAB Resource Centre in Aylesbury. After receiving a referral (either RVI or CVI form see later) the Rehabilitation Officer will contact you to arrange a visit to come and discuss your child’s current needs.
The Rehabilitation Officer can be contacted at:
BAB Resource Centre
143 Meadowcroft
Aylesbury
Bucks, HP19 9HH
[www.bucksblind.co.uk](http://www.bucksblind.co.uk)
Brianj@bucksblind.co.uk
Telephone: 01296 487556

**Milton Keynes Rehabilitation Service**
The visual impairment service in Milton Keynes is provided under contract by the RNIB and has workers based locally within Social Services at Saxon Court. After receiving a referral (either RVI or CVI form see later) the Rehabilitation Officer will contact you to arrange a visit to come and discuss your child’s current needs.
The Rehabilitation Officer can be contacted via ASCAT on 01908 253772 or 01908 253773

The RNIB team also staff a resource centre in Farthing Grove, Netherfield with the assistance of volunteers from the Bucks Association for Blind and Partially Sighted people. The centre is always open on a Tuesday from 9.30am – 4.30pm and visitors are always welcome. Telephone 01908 395498.
Mobility Training
In Bucks the BAB Rehabilitation Officers will provide mobility training around a child’s home. Referrals for mobility training within schools will be made to the Education Mobility Officer via the Qualified Teacher for the Visually Impaired (QTVI). See page 6

In Milton Keynes BAB provide mobility training on behalf of MKC both in schools and around a child’s home. Referrals for mobility training will be made to the QTVI. See page 6

Bucks Association for Blind and Partially Sighted People (BAB)
This is a local registered charity whose staff and volunteers provide a wide range of services for visually impaired people throughout Buckinghamshire. They also provide information about other support services e.g. talking newspapers, special schools and colleges and parent support groups.
The Resource Centre houses a wide range of specialised equipment e.g. talking watches, clocks, kitchen equipment and the latest computer software. It is best to phone and make an appointment to see the equipment.
Social activities for children are arranged during the school holidays.

If your child is referred to the BAB by the Education Department they can provide mobility training in schools to help visually impaired children manage in their school surroundings.

Opening Times – please phone for an appointment 01296 487556
Mon - Thurs 9.00am – 4.30pm
Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm

Qualified Teacher for the Visually Impaired (QTVI)
The QTVI is a qualified teacher with an additional qualification for Disabilities of Sight. This teacher works within the Special Education Needs and Disability Inclusion Service of your Local Education Authority, giving educational advice and support for children who have been recognised as visually impaired.

The Service recognises that effective early intervention can greatly reduce difficulties that might arise from a visual impairment and is vital in helping children to develop their potential for learning and independence.

Very young children will normally be referred to the specialist teacher through the hospital, health visitor, other professionals or nurseries.
Support for very young children is offered via their carers, e.g. parent, child minders and nursery staff, with the aim of raising skills and understanding of those most closely associated with the child.
Early intervention plans for individual children are devised in conjunction with parents and are reviewed regularly.
Education and Statementing Process

A statement of educational needs is a document produced following a full assessment of your child's needs. The statement will take into account the additional help your child will require and what type of equipment they will need in school.

Registration as Sight Impaired or Severely Sight Impaired

There is a register of visually impaired people that exists to enable your local authority to plan its services. Your child does not have to be registered but this may help you to receive certain benefits and concessions. Your ophthalmologist will decide whether your child is eligible for registration. If so, and if you agree, they will fill in a Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) form.

If an Ophthalmologist registers your child as Sight Impaired or Severely Sight Impaired a referral will automatically be made to ASCAT (Adult Social Care Access Team) or BAB who will arrange for the local rehabilitation officer to contact you and carry out an assessment.

If your child is not eligible for registration or you do not wish them to be registered, they can fill in a Referral of Visual Impairment (RVI) form and this will be forwarded to ASCAT (Adult Social Care Access Team) or BAB who will arrange for the local rehabilitation officer to contact you and carry out an assessment.
Educational Considerations for Children with Vision Impairment
(These guidelines should be used discreetly and with acknowledgement that each pupil is an individual whose sight will vary)
In the school environment children can be helped in many ways:

• Encourage the child to explain their visual needs. However continual and undue attention to these should be avoided.

• Ask the child where they would like to sit in the classroom. Give them a close position when doing demonstrations.

• Ensure spectacles are being worn at the correct time and store visual aids so that they are easily accessible to the child.

• Encourage the use of head postures if these improve vision.

• Allow books and objects to be held close to the eyes.

• Enlarge reading material or provide own worksheets and books since sharing is difficult. If this is not possible then place the book on the side of the better vision.

• Exercise books with matt paper and ruled lines are available

• To keep track of lines of print being read, a piece of dark card, possibly with a slit in it, may be helpful.

• Good lighting is essential. It should be placed to the side of the child and directed onto the object being viewed. Be careful that the light is not reflecting from any magnifiers used.

• Allow the use of prescribed tinted glasses, cap, hat or eyeshade to reduce the effects of glare.

• Read aloud when writing on the board and describe diagrams.

• Use strong colour contrast between letters/ figures/ lines and background. These should be well spaced.

• Allow sufficient time to complete tasks.

• Keep games and activities in the same place. e.g. always use the same table for play dough or painting.

• Wall reference displays should be at eye level so children can stand close to it.

• Be aware of playground situations e.g. the child may not see a fast moving ball.

• White lines on the edge of steps and stairs will provide better contrast.
Benefits for Children with Vision Impairment

This section applies to all parents whether claiming benefits or not. Children do not have to be registered with Vision Impairment to receive benefits although registration may help.

Some benefits and claim forms are available to download from the Department of Work and Pensions website [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk). Some benefits can be claimed on-line. The Benefits Enquiry Line Tel: 0800 882 200

**Benefits available:**
- from birth - Child benefit
- from birth - Child Tax Credit
- from 3 months - apply for Disability Living Allowance – care component
- from 2 years - apply for Blue badge
- from 4 years 9 months - apply for Disability Living Allowance – mobility component
- from 16 years - claim Incapacity Benefit and Income Support

**Disability Living Allowance - DLA**
If your child is visually impaired you should claim DLA. It is not based on your income and you do not pay tax on it, so you will always be better off claiming.

There are two components to DLA – *mobility and care.*

**Care component**
Children must have met the qualifying conditions for at least 3 months for the care component to be claimed therefore the earliest it can be claimed is at 3 months.
The care component is paid for extra help that a visually impaired child needs compared with a sighted child of the same age e.g. several visits to hospital or dealing with a child’s contact lens care. There are 3 rates depending on the amount of extra time taken looking after the child.

**Mobility component**
This component is only for children over 5 years but the claim can be made in when a child is aged 4 years 9 months so that it can be paid from the age of five.
This component has 2 rates. Children with sight loss alone will not get the higher rate. They will need to have other disabilities e.g. if they are severely mentally impaired, have behavioural problems, are deaf blind.

**Fares to Hospital**
If you are on Income Support or Tax Credits, you are entitled to travel costs to and from the hospital for NHS treatment. If you have limited savings or on a low income, but not in receipt of the above benefits you may still be able to get help although it may only cover part of the cost. You will need to complete form HC1 that can be obtained from your Local Social Security office, GP practice, Dentist or Opticians.

Leaflet HC11 ‘Help with Health Costs’ is also available from your local Social Security Office or Health Benefits Division on 0845 850 11 66 and gives you more information about help with health costs.
Form HC5 is a refund application form for other health costs that need to be reimbursed and any costs incurred from attending NHS treatment e.g. travel costs. Remember you will need to be entitled to help with health costs when you paid the charges.

**Family Fund Trust**
This fund is to help families caring for a child with special needs and is financed by the government. It is sometimes able to give lump sums for certain items of need where the cost cannot be covered by existing services.

The Family Fund Trust
PO Box 50
York YO1 9ZX
Telephone: 0845 130 4542
[www.familyfundtrust.org.uk](http://www.familyfundtrust.org.uk)

**Action for Blind People’s Grant Service**
They can provide a comprehensive list of organisations that offer grants and give advice on applying for grants.
Telephone: 0800 915 4666

**Comments, Compliments and Complaints**
We want to provide the best possible care to our patients and your views will help us to develop and improve our services.
If you have a problem you can ask to speak to the manager or person in charge.
For further help and advice contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).
Milton Keynes  Telephone: 01908 243633
Buckinghamshire  Telephone: 01296 316042
Support Groups / Organisations

Royal National Institute of the Blind - RNIB
RNIB offer a wide range of family support services. They can provide a “parenting pack” which gives advice on suitable toys, education and other useful information.

RNIB
105 Judd Street
London
WC1H 9NE
Helpline: 0845 766 9999
www.rnib.org.uk

VICTA (Visually Impaired Children taking Action)
VICTA is a family support group in Buckinghamshire for families with visually impaired children. Membership is free and they work closely with the BAB. VICTA can help answer any questions you may have, including concerns about the statementing process to assess educational needs. They organise outings and social events and provide information on toys and games for the visually impaired child. VICTA’s aim is to work towards parents obtaining early diagnosis, correct medical treatment and the best social and educational support, so that each child can reach its full potential. Grants are available for equipment and vacation schemes for the child.

Victa Children Ltd.
P.O. Box 5791
Milton Keynes MK10 1BE
Telephone: 01908 672163
Helpline: 08456 076647
www.victa.org.uk

LOOK
LOOK is a national parent run organisation, which was established to give parents of visually impaired children mutual support. A regular newsletter is produced with lots helpful information.

LOOK
Queen Alexandra College
49 Court Oak Road
Birmingham, B17 9TG
Telephone: 0121 428 5038
www.look-uk.org
**National Blind Childrens Society**
Its aims are to provide the resources to ensure that educational goals can be achieved. Provides grants, advocacy, IT training and large print book service.
Telephone: 01278 764764
www.nbcs.org.uk

**Contact a Family**
A team of advisors will help parents find further information on their child’s condition. They keep a directory of specific conditions and their support networks. If a support group is not available for the child’s condition they can link individual families together to provide support.

Contact a Family
209-211 City Rd,
London EC1V 1JN
Helpline: 0808 808 3555
Telephone: 0207 608 8700
www.cafamily.org.uk

**Nystagmus Network**
Useful information and leaflets concerning nystagmus.

Telephone: 01636 627004
www.nystagmusnet.org

**Albinism Fellowship**
This support group can be contacted on Tuesdays and Fridays between 2-3pm
Telephone: 01282 771900
www.albinism.org.uk
**Teachers Copy - Educational Considerations for Children with Vision Impairment**

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