

# **VISION PROBLEMS, WHAT NOW?**



## **The Ever Open Door**

**A guide  
for all Sheffield  
people with sight  
problems**

**Large Print Version**



Compiled, Edited and Published by



## **MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SHEFFIELD**

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Whilst every effort has been made to provide accurate and up to date information within this publication, it is simply a guide. Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind does not accept liability for any inadvertent errors or omissions.

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# Introduction

## **Don't Panic!**

You have probably been given this book by a member of staff at the Sheffield Royal Hallamshire Hospital, 'Eye Clinic', following a consultation. You may have been advised to register as 'Partially Sighted/Sight Impaired' or even 'Blind/Severely Sight Impaired'.

Understandably, you may feel confused and uncertain about the future. In some people this can manifest itself as anger, depression, a loss of confidence, and even fear. You may even pretend it isn't happening and try to carry on as if nothing is wrong.

However you feel, rest assured you are not the first to have these thoughts and emotions. Believe it or not, there are over 3,000 registered sight impaired people in the Sheffield area alone and all of us have been in the same situation as you. We have all gradually adapted to our enforced change of circumstances and in most cases, have been able to carry on living enjoyable and stimulating lives.

To support you initially and in the future, you have a large number of organisations and groups at your disposal, so your future may turn out better than you think. That said, it can take a while to find out about and obtain the support you may need.

This book was created for that very reason, to save you the trouble we went through. Conceived and constantly updated by fellow sight impaired Sheffield people, it is the most comprehensive local guide available. Keep it handy, as you will probably refer to it many times over the next year or so.

We wish you all the best for the future, and always remember...

**You are not alone!**

## **General Information**

It is easy for those working around people with sight loss to forget that some of the terms used may be confusing if you are just starting with vision problems, so here are a few definitions and explanations before we go any further.

### **What exactly does 'Partially Sighted/Sight Impaired' mean?**

This is the lesser of the two categories of sight loss on the 'Certificate of Visual Impairment'. To qualify, the best you should be able to see is the top letter of a standard eye test chart at 6 metres. If you can see more than this, but have a restricted visual field, you may still qualify.

A person who is registered 'Partially Sighted/Sight Impaired' can generally see and function better than someone registered as 'Blind/Severely Sight Impaired'.

### **What does 'Blind/Severely Sight Impaired' mean?**

This is the other category on the CVI. To qualify, the best you should be able to see is the top letter of a standard eye test chart at 3 metres. (3/60 vision): In effect, you can only see at 3 metres what a fully sighted person can see at 60 metres. If you can see more clearly than this, you may still qualify if your visual field is also restricted.

Worth noting is that only a small minority of 'Blind/Severely Sight Impaired' people have no sight at all.

### **What do the terms 'Visually Impaired' 'Vision Impaired' and 'Sight Impaired' mean?**

These are all just general terms used to describe anyone with sight loss that cannot be corrected by normal glasses.

### **What is a Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI)?**

This is the official document completed by your eye specialist at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital Eye Clinic, if you meet the criteria and then decide to register your visual impairment. Your copy should be kept safe for those occasions when you may be asked to prove you are visually impaired, such as when purchasing concessionary tickets etc.

## **How do I register as visually impaired?**

You become 'registered' once the City Council Social Services Department (who manage the register) receives their copy of your CVI. The 'Register' is confidential and it is managed locally.

## **Is registration compulsory?**

No, you may choose not to register for a number of personal, or professional reasons, but choosing not to, when advised to do so, may create unforeseen problems. Insurance companies may contest future accident or holiday illness claims if they discover you have a sight impairment you have not declared. There could also be serious health and safety issues in the workplace, particularly if you work with, or near dangerous equipment, vehicles, or materials.

## **Why bother registering?**

We recommend registration if you meet the relevant criteria, as it is needed if you wish to apply for most of the help, benefits, services, travel and leisure concessions you may now need.

If you are in work, you may fear registration on the grounds that it could affect your career. This may be true in some cases, but hiding sight loss from your employer can create problems if ever you either have, or cause, an accident at work. 'Muddling through' is likely to cause relationship problems with fellow workers as well. You may be perceived by colleagues as 'losing it' or they may question your ability to carry out your duties.

Once registered, your boss and colleagues will understand what the problem is. You will also be covered by the company's insurance, as well as the latest disability discrimination legislation. Ironically, your job may actually be safer if you have a registered disability. Equipment and personal assistance may also be available through the Department of Work and Pensions' 'Access to Work' scheme (see 'Employment' section).

## **What do I do next?**

Once registered, the Neighbourhoods and Communities Care, 'Sensory Impairment Service' will make contact and arrange to come and see you, (see 'Local Services'). In the meantime, you could get in contact with Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind (SRSB), and they will give you all the help and advice you need.

## **What can others experiencing sight loss see?**

Although you are experiencing sight loss yourself and know your own symptoms only too well, there are numerous medical conditions that affect sight in different ways. This is why some people seem more or less able to cope than others. Yes, some of this is down to confidence, but even people of the same age, with the same condition can experience different symptoms and levels of sight loss. Across different conditions, the variations can be extreme. For example, someone with the onset of 'Macular Disease' loses the ability to see detail in the central area of their visual field. Whilst those affected can often find their way around unaided, they are unable to read, watch Television normally, or recognise people. Those with 'Retinitis Pigmentosa' however, often have the exact opposite effect. They usually develop tunnel vision, which makes getting about very difficult, but they can usually read until the condition is very advanced.

Other conditions can cause colour blindness, night blindness, distortion, discomfort and detail loss in bright light, halo or patchwork effects, fogging, and even double vision.

The RNIB Website has an excellent section on eye conditions that should cover everything you need to know about your own and other people's conditions, symptoms and possible treatments. Go to [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) and click on the 'Eye Health' link.

## **What is 'Neighbourhoods and Communities Care'?**

This is the new name for the Social Services Department; however, the public still refer to them as 'Social Services'.

## **What is 'First Point'?**

This is the agency you talk to when you telephone, or enter Howden House. They also carry out 'Personal Assessments of Need' on behalf of Social Services. They are in effect, your first contact with Social Services, hence the name.

## **What does 'SRSB' stand for?**

SRSB stands for 'Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind' (see 'Local Services'). Older people may still refer to it as 'The Blind Institute' or just 'Mappin Street' but 'SRSB' is taking over as the name of choice. Worth noting is that the 'Royal National Institute of Blind People' (RNIB) is a totally unrelated national sight charity and SRSB receive no funding from them.

## **Local Services**

### **The Royal Hallamshire Hospital**

#### **Ophthalmic Out-patients Department**

You will be referred to the Eye Department, if your doctor or optician identifies a problem with your eyes that cannot be corrected by simply wearing prescription glasses.

First consultation and subsequent visits are by appointment only and it is within this department that any tests will be carried out to establish the nature of your condition.

Treatment, if appropriate, is carried out either in the Eye Department or the Day Case Centre. It is in the Eye Department that those who qualify, can choose to be certified as visually impaired.

Other services include a Contact lens service, Prosthetic Eye Department, Orthoptic Department, Electro-diagnostic Unit and Low vision services.

Contact: Royal Hallamshire Hospital  
Glossop Road  
Sheffield  
S10 2JF

Telephone: (Clinic Reception) **0114 271 3930**

### **Low Vision Services**

#### **The Low Vision Clinic and Assessment**

The purpose of a Low Vision Assessment is to work out the best way of using the vision of someone whose sight cannot be improved by medical treatment or ordinary spectacles. This is often achieved by better use of lighting, contrast and reducing the effects of glare in addition to the use of appropriate magnifying aids. You will not be tested for glasses at this assessment.

A Low Vision Therapist will discuss the implications of your poor sight with you and suggest ways to improve your ability to read, write and undertake other activities which you may be having difficulty with.

For most people, some of the effects of sight loss can be compensated by the use of appropriate low vision aids.

You will usually be able to choose from a range of magnifiers that have been shown to help. You will be shown the best way to use them as well as special techniques to help you see more clearly. They will then be loaned to you for use at home.

A recommendation to the relevant organisational bodies will be given to you should you require aids solely for education or employment purposes. Information about other organisations and services that may help you, local and national, is also available.

Referral to other services such as Neighbourhoods and Communities Care, formerly Social Services Sensory Impairment Team, and Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind (SRSB) can be made.

The range of aids available for tasks such as reading small print include simple hand, stand and pocket magnifiers, illuminated stand and pocket magnifiers and hands free magnifiers. Distance binoculars and monocular telescopes are also available to aid distance viewing, including television.

Initial referral to this clinic is made by your Ophthalmologist at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, or Sheffield Children's Hospital.

The Low Vision Clinic operates an appointment system. After your first attendance, subsequent advice on low vision issues can be requested if your vision or needs change. There are no facilities for seeing people who arrive without an appointment.

Contact: Low Vision Service  
A Floor  
Royal Hallamshire Hospital  
Glossop Road  
Sheffield  
S10 2JF

Telephone: **0114 271 3021**

Karen Dolling, Support Nurse for the Visually Impaired, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust

My role is to meet the needs of visually impaired patients, their carers, relatives and staff. I am able to use my networking skills to liaise and provide information about local and national agencies who work with the visually impaired.

I am also a Low Vision Trainer, able to help with problem solving ideas for patients in their everyday lives. I work with adults and children of all ages.

Contact: Karen Dolling  
Support Nurse for the Visually Impaired  
The Ophthalmic Department  
Royal Hallamshire Hospital

Telephone: **0114 226 1262**

**Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind (SRSB)**

'SRSB' is the primary independent provider of services to local sight impaired people, even those not yet registered. Founded in 1860 and at the Mappin Street Centre since 1939, the society has recently redeveloped the site to give the people of Sheffield a brand new, purpose made centre.

This completely independent charity is funded entirely from local sources, donations and legacies. Services are provided by a dedicated and highly motivated team of paid staff and volunteers and most of their services are provided at no cost. A daily lunch club and trips are charged for, but prices are heavily subsidised. Help is just a simple phone call away.

**The services SRSB provide are:**

Community Advisory Service

A team of full-time Community Advice Officers is available to visit people in their own homes and give practical help and advice, as well as assisting in the completion of benefit and welfare forms. They also undertake 'Needs Assessments', on behalf of Social Services, for people aged over 75 when they are first registered as Sight Impaired.

### Welcome Group

All new clients are invited to a 'Welcome Group' meeting at the Mappin Street Centre. This provides a useful introduction to all the services available in Sheffield and is a great opportunity to make useful contacts.

### Activities Centre

Of particular interest to the older members of the society, activities take place at the Mappin Street Centre, weekdays from 10am till 2:30pm. Transport is usually available in the society's own minibuses. Tea and biscuits are served on arrival as well as a subsidised cooked lunch at 1pm. A range of activities, entertainment and the occasional outing, are organised by staff and volunteers. It is a great place for members to make new friends and socialise with others in the same boat as themselves. Activities for people of all ages are currently being developed.

### Equipment Centre

Open from 8:30am to 4:30pm the Equipment Centre sells a wide selection of goods designed to help people with sight loss maintain their independence. On offer are items such as talking watches/clocks/mobile phones/radios and even a talking microwave oven. The range of smaller items is far too large to list, so the best thing to do is call in and ask at Reception.

### Children's Services

SRSB offers a range of activities for their young clients and families. These include SRSB's Little Sparklers Group, activity days, theatre trips, Christmas trips, Sheffield Actionaires and annual summer trips.

### Library Service

Talking books are available on free loan from SRSB's Library and Information centre. The Society can also advise you on the various audio book services available such as Calibre, RNIB Talking Books and Sheffield City Library.

### British Wireless for the Blind

SRSB administer the British Wireless for the Blind Fund in the Sheffield area. They can provide on loan Radio/Cassette/CD players free of charge to registered, sight impaired people, subject to certain additional criteria being met.



### Residential Home

SRSB operates Cairn Home for the Elderly Blind at Crosspool, which is registered with the National Care Standards Commission and provides the highest quality of residential care for visually impaired people. For further information or to arrange to look round the home please contact the Manager on **0114 266 1536**.

### Overend Cottages

SRSB have 3 flats at Crosspool which are let to visually impaired people. They are all on the ground floor with level access and consist of Kitchen/Living Room, Bedroom and Bathroom. There is also a 2 bedroom house at Crosspool.

### Sports & Leisure

SRSB organise numerous activities and events through the year, including Day Trips, Holidays, Social Events, Gardening, Archery, Creative Writing and Swimming. Some of these activities take place at their Centre and others take place round and about Sheffield. For the latest information, ring SRSB, get hold of a newsletter, or check the website.

### Newsletter

Members are sent quarterly, large print newsletter and events diary. This is also available on audio cassette, braille and by email if required.

Contact: Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind  
Mappin Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4DT

Telephone: **0114 272 2757**

Website: [www.srsb.org.uk](http://www.srsb.org.uk)

E-mail: [info@srsb.org.uk](mailto:info@srsb.org.uk)

## **Services for people with impaired vision/hearing**

The Sensory Impairment Service, within Sheffield City Council, offers specialist assessments and services to people with severe vision and/or hearing loss. If you ask for an assessment the assessor will consider a wide range of your needs but concentrate on the practical and emotional difficulties experienced by people with a sensory loss as well the impact that these difficulties have on their carers.

The term deafblind refers to a large number of people who have a combined vision and hearing loss rather than only the very small number of people with no useful sight or hearing. Each local authority social services department has a duty to identify the deafblind people in their area, make contact with them and offer an assessment of their needs. We also have a duty to ensure that the services we provide are appropriate to the needs of deafblind people.

Our specialist assessors will discuss their assessment with each customer and advise them which of the needs they have identified will be eligible for the provision of a service. Some of the services provided by the Sensory Impairment Team are described below:

### Special equipment

Visually impaired people may need equipment to enable them to read important correspondence or to prepare and cook food and make drinks safely.

Deaf people may need alerting by flashing lights or vibrating pagers to a wide range of events such as callers at their door, smoke alarms etc. There is also equipment to help Deaf people use the telephone to communicate in an emergency.

For those people that do not fall within our eligibility criteria we can provide advice on equipment that is most suitable to their needs and information on how to purchase it themselves.

### Learning new skills

Visually impaired people may need to be trained in new techniques to enable them to move around safely, carry out a range a household tasks, access correspondence or information on their computer etc.

### Group activities and emotional support

Some learning is best done in groups where the support of the other people, with similar difficulties, is available. Meeting people who have risen to the challenge of their sensory loss may inspire others to learn new ways of doing familiar tasks.

Many people with a severe sensory impairment feel isolated and emotionally vulnerable. Staff in the Sensory Impairment Team are aware of these issues and will aim to improve your confidence and independence through their work with you.

There are social groups for Deaf and deafblind people as well as groups for carers of visually impaired people.

Contact: The Sensory Impairment Team  
Floor 1, Howden House  
Union Street  
Sheffield  
S1 2SH

Telephone: **0114 273 4977**

Text Message: **07881 835 474**

A duty service for deaf people is available each Tuesday morning (9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.) and Thursday afternoon (2.00 - 4.30 p.m.). A Rehabilitation Officer for visually impaired people is available each Tuesday afternoon (2.00 – 4.30 p.m.). Enquiries at other times (including emergencies outside office hours) can be made to 273 4908.

### **City Wide Care Alarms Service**

This is a 24/7 support service that is ideal, and some would say essential, for sight impaired people who live alone.

When you join, for just £4.81 per week, you are given an alarm pendant to wear all the time when at home. When activated by you, your telephone automatically calls for help. There is also on-going telephone help that you can ring as well.

Contact: City Wide Care Alarms  
1st Floor Priory Office  
Station Road  
Darnall  
Sheffield  
S9 4JT

Telephone: **0800 013 0980**

E-mail: [citywidecarealarms@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:citywidecarealarms@sheffield.gov.uk)

## Local Groups

In addition to SRSB and Social Services, a number of smaller independent or affiliated groups operate in this area. These are often run by fellow sight impaired people. Some receive support from SRSB and Social Services but they tend to just get on and do their own specific thing. Some are sport or socially based and others are self-help groups. Sight impaired members often join more than one group as they sometimes only meet once or twice per month. Here is the current list, but remember, if you find that you need a new group in your area, you can always start your own. For help with this, feel free to contact SRSB for guidance and practical help.

### **The Social Group**

This group, formerly known as the Ravenscroft Group, now meet every Monday 10am to 12:30pm at SRSB. They meet socially and for outings. For further information contact SRSB

### **Sheffield Macular Group**

We are a social, self-help and support group with about 50 members.

We meet on the first Thursday of each month (except January and August) at 1.30 for 2.00 p.m. in the United Reformed Church Café, off Chapel Walk, Norfolk Street. During refreshments there is a chance to chat and exchange information with others. There is a programme of speakers who cover a variety of topics. Members pay £10 a year to cover the cost of running the group. Carers are very welcome, but we may ask them to help at meetings.

Telephone: (Robin Story) **0114 236 2251**

E-mail: [story.rob@yaho.co.uk](mailto:story.rob@yaho.co.uk)

### **Charles Bonnet Syndrome Support Group**

This group is for people experiencing 'Phantom Visions' as the syndrome is often called. This can be a very worrying side effect of sight loss, where the brain tries to compensate for not seeing, by creating hallucinations. The group meet once a month at SRSB's Mappin Street Centre.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Visually Impaired Tennis**

The VI Tennis Group meet weekly, on a Saturday, at Hallamshire tennis and squash club. They receive some very good coaching and have time to play a few sets.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Blind & Partially Sighted Bowling Group**

This group plays at Hillsborough Park during summer outdoor season and indoors during the winter, at Concord Sports Centre, Wednesdays at 10am. Coaching is available for new members. Membership costs £5 per season.

Telephone: (Graham Draycott) **0114 286 4121**

## **Ten Pin Bowling Club**

This is a very popular and successful group with members of the team representing Great Britain although it caters for people of all abilities. Their main aim is to socialise and have fun in doing so. It meets at MFA Bowl Firth Park on alternate Tuesdays from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

Telephone: (Lee Hartley) **07932 693 415**

## **Swimming Group**

The swimming group meets every Thursday and is taken to Upperthorpe Baths. Participants leave the Red Deer public house late morning for a 1 hour swim. The cost of the swimming is just over £3 but nearer £2 with a "slice card". After the swim, members are brought back to the Red Deer where they promptly retire to this local hostelry for lunch and a drink.

Telephone: (Kathy Greenwood) **0114 272 9885**

## **Visually Impaired Archery Club**

This is a very popular group suitable for people of all abilities. It meets every Wednesday afternoon at the Northern General Hospital, Spinal Injuries Unit Sports Hall.

Telephone: (Les Culf) **0114 246 5515**

## **Walking Group**

The group meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month. It also meets once per month on a Thursday. Tuesday walks are shorter and easier. Thursday walks are more challenging.

Telephone: (Christine Hewitt) **0114 236 6685**

## **Sheffield VIP Creative Writers Group**

This lively and diverse group meet from 11:15am to 12:45pm every Friday at SRSB's Mappin Street Centre. All abilities and writing styles welcome. Members who cannot see enough to read their own work have it read out by a sighted volunteer, so there's no excuse not to have a go. This group produced a CD of their poems and prose in 2004 and it is being sold for £4 by SRSB to raise funds for the society. If you would like more information, on either the group or the CD, then please get in touch with SRSB.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Discussion Group**

This informal group meets on the first Monday of every month at SRSB, 11:00am to 1:00pm, to discuss topical issues. For further information contact SRSB.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Goalball**

Goalball is a sport for visually impaired and blind people. It is a fun, fast paced game which attracted a lot of attention after the 2012 Paralympics. The club meets on a fortnightly basis at City College, Granville Road, Sheffield S2 2RL.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Crafty Ladies**

This is an art and craft group, currently comprised entirely of women, which meets alternate Fridays at the Ravenscroft Resource Centre Bungalow. If you fancy getting involved in this kind of creativity in spite of failing sight, then give the group a try.

They are also keen to encourage men to have a go but this may mean a group name change.

Telephone: (Karen Swann or Ali Anthony) **0114 273 4866**

## **RP Support Group**

RP (Retinitis Pigmentosa) is an eye condition affecting the retina usually affecting peripheral vision first and in time central vision as well. It is usually inherited. The support group meets every few months at SRSB.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **The SRSB Singers**

The Singing Group is an increasingly popular group run by David Cox, an Occupational Therapist. The groups currently meet on Mondays and Wednesdays, with people attending one or both groups. It is a chance to meet socially as well as enjoying singing together a wide range of songs. For more information contact SRSB.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Book Club**

The Book Club meet regularly at SRSB to discuss a book that the group has chosen. Books are available in audio format well in advance of each meeting. The discussions are relaxed and enjoyable. For further information contact SRSB.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Little Sparklers**

The 'Little Sparklers' group for pre-school children with a visual impairment (and siblings) takes place every Wednesday 10am to 12noon at our Mappin Street Centre. The group is proving a huge success and has several members making the most of the service that is tailored to the children and their specific requirements. They can play with sensory and stimulating toys such as tactile, fibre optics, cause and effect, dark dens etc. The group also arranges trips to other appropriate services like hydrotherapy pool sessions. It is run by staff and volunteers from SRSB as well as staff from the pre-school team at Sheffield City Council's Education Department, Visual Impairment Service. If you are interested in attending this group or would like further information, please contact SRSB

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **Tai Chi**

A Tai Chi group meets every Friday at SRSB from 2:30pm to 3:30pm. This is a very popular group. If you would like to join in or require further information please contact SRSB.

Telephone: (SRSB) **0114 272 2757**

## **National Organisations**

This section lists the key national organisations and charities that you may wish to contact for specific help or information, not available locally. There are many others, but we feel this list will more than suffice for the vast majority of local people. If you DO want more, the RNIB has a database of ALL UK organisations.

### **The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)**

This is the largest organisation providing services for sight impaired people in the UK.

They have a comprehensive range of services including help and advice on financial benefits, education, employment, health and leisure.

They sell a wide range of products for pleasure, daily living and mobility, all of which can be found in their free catalogues.

RNIB is now a membership organisation enabling blind and partially sighted people to get in touch with other people who have had similar experiences and give them a chance to exchange information and opinions.

Through the scheme, they will provide information about how they can help, as well as details of other organisations specially tailored to the needs of blind and partially sighted people. Each new member will receive a Welcome pack, invitations to member events, access to an online community and help from RNIB's membership team. RNIB members will be able to vote for members of RNIB's Consultative Assembly.

Ring Customer Services if you are interested in becoming a member or need advice.

Tip: The RNIB Website: is a superb resource for anything to do with sight loss, with lots of information on specific eye conditions and possible treatments.



Contact: Royal National Institute of Blind People  
105 Judd Street London  
WC1H 9NE  
Telephone: **0303 123 9999**  
Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## **Action for Blind People**

Action for Blind People provides a comprehensive information service on a range of subjects including employment, residential care and welfare benefits. They also provide an excellent holiday and leisure resource.

Information is generally available in several formats. The organisation owns a number of hotels specialising in holidays for sight impaired people and have a number of housing schemes which are based in the south of the country.

Their team will help if you are seeking, or wishing to change your accommodation. They offer advice, practical help and benefit advice relating to your housing needs.

Contact: Action for Blind People  
53 Sandgate Street  
London  
SE15 1LE  
Telephone: **0207 635 4800**  
Website: [www.afbp.org](http://www.afbp.org)  
E-mail: [info@afbp.org](mailto:info@afbp.org)

## **The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA)**

Probably the best known sight charity amongst the general public, and for people with severe sight loss, who need help getting around independently.

For those able to handle and care for a dog, this service transforms lives. Successful applicants undergo a three week training course with a guide dog at a local hotel and the benefits of regaining independence soon follow.

Almost all costs are met by the charity and support is always just a phone call away.

Contact: The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association  
6 Innovate Mews  
Lakeview Drive, Sherwood Park

Annesley  
Nottingham  
NG15 0EA

Telephone: **0845 372 7424**  
Head Office: **0118 983 5555**  
Website: [www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)

## **The Macular Disease Society**

If your eye condition is one of those collectively described as 'Macular Disease', this organisation may be of interest.

The Society provides information and practical support so that those with loss of central vision can make the most of their remaining vision. To this end, there is an office hours telephone helpline and a very useful website. Affiliated to the society, there are a large number of locally based self-help groups (one of which is based here in Sheffield).

They produce a quarterly magazine, 'Side View', written by members for members and this is available in large print or on audio cassette.

## **WAM (Working Age Macular)**

As the majority of people with a macular disease are elderly, the younger members of the 'MDS' have formed 'WAM'. These active members aren't willing to go down without a fight and are hell bent on maximising their potential, as well as having fun. They also pass on to each other useful information, specific to working or working age people with Macular Disease. There is no local 'WAM' group as yet, but contact with the group may still be advantageous to you if you fit this category.

Contact: The Macular Disease Society  
PO Box 1870  
Andover  
SP10 9AD  
Telephone: **0126 435 0551**  
Helpline: **0845 241 2041**  
Website: [www.maculardisease.org](http://www.maculardisease.org)  
E-mail: [info@maculardisease.org](mailto:info@maculardisease.org)

## **The Partially Sighted Society (PSS)**

Formed in 1973, the Partially Sighted Society's services include the following:

Low vision assessment or advice on where to go for a low vision assessment and low vision aids.

Mail Order Catalogue of daily living aids for visually impaired people.

Advice and information on all aspects of living with a visual impairment.

Note: Good though this organisation's services are, it doesn't offer Sheffield people anything they can't get locally through SRSB, Social Services, the Low Vision Clinic, and local equipment supplier, SW Retail.

Contact: The Partially Sighted Society  
1 Bennetthorpe  
Doncaster  
DN2 6AA

Telephone: **0844 477 4966**

Website: [www.partsight.org.uk](http://www.partsight.org.uk)

## **Blind Veterans UK**

Are you an ex-Service man, or woman with a visual impairment?

Founded in 1915, this national charity's objective is to provide training, rehabilitation and lifelong after-care for ex-Service men and women who are experiencing sight loss and to help them overcome the difficulties they experience as a result.

With an excellent training centre on Fulwood Road in Sheffield and local rehabilitation staff, St Dunstan's is really making a difference to the lives of local people.

Contact: Blind Veterans UK (Head Office)  
12-14 Harcourt Street  
London  
W1H 4HD

Telephone: **0207 723 5021**

E-mail: [enquiries@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@blindveterans.org.uk)

Contact: Blind Veterans UK (Sheffield)  
276 Fulwood Road  
Sheffield  
S10 3BN

Telephone: **0114 267 2550**

## **The National Blind Children's Society (NBCS)**

The National Blind Children's Society's mission is to enable children and young people who are blind or partially sighted to achieve their educational and recreational goals.

As the largest independent provider of services to children with visual impairment, National Blind Children's Society is developing all the time and intends to remain at the forefront of highlighting and providing for the needs of all children who are visually impaired and their families.

National Blind Children's Society is the leading producer of bespoke large-print books for children and young people, and supplies books for the Royal National Institute of Blind People's National Library Service. We are continually working to improve our service and increase the range and number of publications available.

Contact: The National Blind Children's Society  
48-62 Woodville Rd,  
Harborne,  
Birmingham,  
B17 9AT

Telephone: **0845 372 7332**

Website: [www.nbcs.org.uk](http://www.nbcs.org.uk)

## **The National Federation of the Blind of the United Kingdom (NFBUK)**

The NFBUK is a campaigning organisation whose aim is to improve the quality of life of all visually impaired people. They campaign for a safer environment, for example, drawing to the attention of the public the dangers of obstacles on pavements including parked cars, better social services and benefits etc. They publish a quarterly magazine 'Viewpoint' in print, Braille and on audio cassette. Membership of the Federation is £4.00 per year.

Contact: The National Federation of the Blind UK  
Sir John Wilson House  
215 Kirkgate  
Wakefield  
WF1 1JG

Telephone: **0192 429 1313**

Website: [www.nfbuk.org](http://www.nfbuk.org)  
E-mail: [admin@nfbuk.org](mailto:admin@nfbuk.org)

## **The National Federation of Families with Visually Impaired Children (LOOK)**

LOOK brings together local groups of families with children who are visually impaired and who are facing similar problems so that they can share information and offer mutual support.

LOOK can provide assistance and expertise, keeping local groups and individuals up to date with all the key issues affecting their children such as benefit entitlements, advice about suitable toys, games and education choices.

Contact: LOOK National Office  
c/o Queen Alexandra College  
49 Court Oak Road  
Harborne  
Birmingham  
B17 9TG

Telephone: **0121 428 5038**

Website: [www.look-uk.org](http://www.look-uk.org)

E-mail: [information@look-uk.org](mailto:information@look-uk.org)

## **Torch Trust for the Blind**

The Torch Trust is a Christian organisation with a worldwide vision for people with sight loss. Torch has literature going to 100 countries across the globe.

Torch is at work in other countries through mutually supportive partnerships with local organisations and individuals. Torch publishes a Directory of Christian Services for Blind and Partially Sighted People Worldwide.

Torch has a longstanding involvement in Africa and produces accessible Bibles in African languages at its International base in Malawi.

Contact: Torch Trust for the Blind,  
Torch House, Torch Way,  
Northampton Road, Market Harborough,  
Leicestershire,  
LE16 9HL

Telephone: **0185 843 8260**

Website: [www.torchtrust.org](http://www.torchtrust.org)

E-mail: [Info@torchtrust.org](mailto:Info@torchtrust.org)

There are many more National, regional and condition-specific organisations out there, so it is impossible for us to cover them all. We believe the above selection covers what most people need at first.

To seek out more organisations, carry out an internet search in [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk) or [www.speegle.co.uk](http://www.speegle.co.uk) but limit the search to 'United Kingdom' or you will be swamped.

## **Condition Specific Organisations**

### **The Albinism Fellowship, Burnley**

Telephone: **0128 277 1900**

Website: [www.albinism.org.uk](http://www.albinism.org.uk)

### **The British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society, Buckingham**

Telephone: **0845 123 2354**

Website: [www.brps.org.uk](http://www.brps.org.uk)

### **International Glaucoma Association, London**

Telephone: **0123 364 8170**

Website: [www.iga.org.uk](http://www.iga.org.uk)

### **Nystagmus Network, Newark**

Telephone: **0845 634 2630**

Website: [www.nystagmusnet.org](http://www.nystagmusnet.org)

### **The Retinoblastoma Society, London**

Telephone: **0207 377 5578**

Website: [www.cheect.org.uk](http://www.cheect.org.uk)

# Allowances, Benefits and Grants

Note: This section is currently in the process of being rewritten. Some of the information may not be complete. For help and more information please contact SRSB.

Telephone: (SRSB) 0114 272 2757

## **Benefits that you can claim if you are aged 16 to 64 and blind or partially sighted**

### **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)**

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a benefit aimed at helping you with the extra costs caused by illness or disability – including sight loss. It replaces Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people aged 16 to 64. PIP is there to help with daily living activities and getting out and around. It is split into two parts or 'components', a daily living component, and a mobility component. You may be successful in claiming one or both of these components.

Each component then has two rates:

- A standard rate for people who the DWP decide has a limited ability to carry out daily living or mobility activities because of their physical or mental condition.
- An enhanced rate for people who the DWP decide has a severely limited ability to carry out daily living or mobility activities because of their physical or mental condition.

It is not a means-tested benefit – so you can claim it no matter what your income is – and the DWP pays it tax free.

People who are already in receipt of DLA and are aged between 16 and 64 are gradually being transferred over onto PIP.

### **Employment Support Allowance (ESA)**

ESA is a benefit for people who:

- Have limited capability for work because of sickness or disability.
- Are not working (although voluntary work and some limited paid work are allowed).
- Are aged 16 or over, but under the age at which you can claim your state pension.

- Are not entitled to certain other benefits (Statutory Sick Pay, Incapacity Benefit, Income Support, Severe Disablement Allowance, or Jobseeker's Allowance).

ESA replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support (paid on the basis of incapacity for work) for new claimants on 27 October 2008. Jobcentre Plus will transfer existing Incapacity Benefit and Income Support claimants over to ESA by 2014.

ESA has two elements: contributory ESA for people who have paid sufficient National Insurance contributions and income-related ESA for those who are on a low income. You may qualify for one or both elements.

Once you have applied for ESA you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and then attend an assessment to determine if you qualify and if so which group you will be placed in.

ESA has two groups: a support group or a work-related activity group. People in the support group receive more ESA and do not have to attend interviews with a Jobcentre Plus adviser. People in the work-related activity group receive less ESA and do have to attend regular interviews with an adviser. If you are in the work-related group, the maximum amount of time that you can receive contributory ESA for is limited to 365 days. Your 13-week assessment phase counts towards the 365-day period. The time limit does not apply to you if you are in the support group.

## **Working Tax Credit**

Working Tax Credit has a disability component for disabled people who are either returning to or taking up work.

If you become registered Sight impaired/ severely sight impaired it is always advisable to get an up to date benefits check.



## **Grants**

### **Grants from the RNIB**

If you are in receipt of a means tested benefit but not one that is a tax credit you may be able to claim a grant from the RNIB. You may be able to receive a grant for carpets and furniture, “white goods” (cooker, fridge, freezer, washing machine), debts for essential services, essential adaptations, repairs or redecoration, and other domestic equipment. They cannot give grants for clothing, holidays, computer software or other assistive technology.

The maximum amount that they can give is £400 at any one time.

Contact: Information Resource Team  
RNIB  
105 Judd Street  
London  
WC1H 9NE

Telephone: **0303 123 9999**

Email: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

### **The Family Fund**

This is a government fund administered by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to help families who are caring for a severely disabled child under the age of 16.

Contact: Family Fund  
4 Alpha Court  
Monks Cross Drive  
York  
YO32 9WN

Telephone: **0190 462 1115**

Website: [www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)

### **Royal Blind Society Grant**

You may be able to claim a grant towards a holiday or the purchase of items which will help you with daily living.

All claims must be made with the recommendation of a rehabilitation officer, social worker or an official from a recognised blind association (SRSB in Sheffield) or agency such as a Citizen’s Advice Bureau.

Contact: The Royal Blind Society

RBS House  
59 – 61 Sea Lane  
Rustington  
West Sussex  
BN16 2RQ

Telephone: **0190 385 7023**

Website: [www.royalblindsociety.org](http://www.royalblindsociety.org)

## **Non-Financial Benefits**

Although less important than the straight financial benefits detailed above, these other benefits all add up and can make a big difference to your life if they are for you. For example, a Free Travel Permit may save you £300+ per year in bus fares!

### **Free NHS Sight Test**

Even if your sight problem has been diagnosed as untreatable, you should continue to have regular sight tests so that any new disorders can be detected early, and to safeguard any residual vision you have. Tell the optician you are registered sight impaired before the sight test.

### **Free Spare NHS Hearing Aid**

If you use a NHS hearing aid, your blind or partially sighted registration entitles you to have one spare aid free. Telephone: **0114 271 2913** for more information.

### **Free Postage on Items Marked ARTICLES FOR THE BLIND**

This only applies to large print documents, Braille or recordings such as talking books and Newsletters.

### **Special Arrangements for Voting at Elections**

Contact the Electoral Registrar's office at the Town Hall and ask about postal or proxy voting well before the election.

### **Free Directory Enquiry Service**

All registered sight impaired people qualify for the free 195 Directory Enquiry service. Simply call 195 and an operator will ask you for your PIN number (given when you register) and your name. The operator will then ask you for the name of the party you want to call and find the number. They can also help you find a service contact number such as a Plumber or Electrician.

Tip: They don't usually offer, but you can ask the operator to connect you as well.

To register, call **195** from any phone.

### **BT 1471-3 Discount**

(Only for those with BT land lines) If you are registered for the previous service, you should ring 195 again and ask to be registered for the BT 1471-3 discount scheme as well. Once registered, whenever you check for missed phone calls (by dialling 1471), you can then press '3' to return the call at no extra cost. All right, so this one isn't going to save you a lot of money, but you may as well register and save a bit.

### **English National Concession Travel Pass**

This is a national scheme by the Department of Transport in conjunction with local authorities across England.

It allows disabled and elderly people free bus travel at off-peak times, all day weekends and bank holidays.

The pass can be used from 9:30am until 11pm. For more information contact SRSB.

### **Portable CD/Radio/Cassette Player on Free Loan**

SRSB administer the British Wireless for the Blind Fund for the Sheffield area. They can provide on loan Radio/Cassette/CD players free of charge to people registered as Blind or Partially Sighted, subject to certain additional criteria being met.

### **2 for 1 Deals**

Increasingly, entertainment and leisure organisations are offering '2 for the price of 1' or discount concessions to sight impaired customers. These include cinemas, swimming pools, gyms, festivals, etc. As a rule, ALWAYS ASK! Some systems are highly formalised, using in-house ID Cards but with others, it is just a case of asking and showing proof of disability as you pay.

# Travel Concessions

This section provides information on how to save yourself a lot of money travelling and how to get around using public and private transport.

## **The Blue Badge Scheme**

This is a car parking concession. The car does not need to be yours. To qualify for this concession you must be registered blind/severely sight impaired. Registered partially sighted people can only qualify if they have an additional disability which impairs mobility. Contact Social Services or SRSB for more information.

## **Help With Travel to Work Costs**

You may qualify for travel to work expenses under the 'Access to Work' scheme. (See full details in 'Employment' section of this book).

## **Disabled Persons Railcard**

This card entitles you to a third off the cost of most rail tickets for both you and a travelling companion. The card is renewable each year and currently costs £20 for 1 year or £50 for 3 years. To apply, pick up a 'Disabled Person's Railcard booklet from any ticket office, Social Services or SRSB.

Contact: Disabled Persons Railcard Office  
PO Box 11631  
Laurencekirk  
AB30 9AA

Telephone: **0845 605 0525** (7am to 10pm, Monday to Sunday)

Website: [www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk)

## **Disabled Persons' Travel Assistance (Trains)**

Train travel can be daunting even for fully sighted people. This service co-ordinates personal help at stations. Staff will help you finding the right platform, a seat on both platform and train, changing trains at an unfamiliar station and help with luggage.

If you are registered blind or partially sighted AND have a Disabled Persons' Railcard, you can book assistance at the same time as you buy your ticket. It is advisable to give at least 48 hours notice before your travel time.

Having booked assistance, you should report to the 'Customer Service' desk on the station concourse 20 minutes before the scheduled departure time of your train.

## **Community Transport**

If you have difficulty using public transport then Sheffield Community Transport may be the answer. It is much cheaper than taxis, and it provides you with a door to door service using accessible minibuses. Community Transport operates Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm and will take you anywhere within the city boundary. Bookings must be made 7 days in advance and you must be registered with them.

Telephone: **0114 276 6148**

Website: [www.sheffieldct.co.uk](http://www.sheffieldct.co.uk)

## **South Yorkshire Visually Impaired Mobility Pass**

If you are registered as blind or partially sighted, you can obtain a South Yorkshire Visually Impaired Mobility Pass. This is like the bus pass for senior citizens although it allows free travel from 9:30am to 11pm. The visually impaired mobility pass is like all other mobility passes and has an orange stripe down the right hand side – it should also have an eye symbol near the top right hand corner, which means that you should not be issued with a ticket.

The pass is valid on public service buses (not coaches) throughout England between 9:30am and 11pm. It also allows you to travel free of charge on local Supertram. The card is only valid for tram travel throughout South Yorkshire.

If you are registered blind or partially sighted SRSB can help you with the application process. If you do not have a bus pass at all then we can issue a letter confirming your registration for you to take to the Travel Information Centre. You will also need to take proof of your address and identity. You no longer need to take a photograph as they will take a digital picture at the Travel Information Centre. For more information on what proof of identity you need please call the Travel Line **0170 951 5151**.

If you are registered blind or partially sighted and you already have a senior citizen pass please contact SRSB as we will usually be able to arrange for a mobility special pass to be sent to your address.

You will be given your permit in an orange wallet. If you use this wallet at request stops, the bus driver should realise you have a sight problem and he or she will then understand if you have stopped the wrong bus by mistake. If you have not been given an orange wallet then please contact SRSB to arrange to get one.

### **Disabled persons Coach Card**

National Express has a Disabled persons Coach Card. This entitles you to a third off from National Express coaches. It costs £11.50 per year.

### **National Rail Travel 'Two for One' Scheme**

To muddy the waters even more, there is also a lesser known rail travel concession available nationally on ALL full price rail tickets. It is a 2 for the price of 1 deal, to cover the cost of a guide, or carer's ticket, but (and it's a big but), it is ONLY on FULL PRICE tickets. This deal is a 'non-event' as two 'standard' discounted tickets are invariably cheaper than 2 for 1 at full price.

### **Large Print Bus Timetables**

If you require a bus timetable in large print, simply ring Travel Line and ask for one to be posted directly to you. You will need to specify the route to ensure that you receive the correct one.

Unfortunately, at time of printing, there is no equivalent large print service for rail journeys, but we are working on it. In the meantime, ring Travel Line and they will give you the information you need verbally.

Contact: Travel Line  
Telephone: **01709 5151 51**  
Website: [www.sypte.co.uk](http://www.sypte.co.uk)

# Education

## Under 16

### **The Service for Visually Impaired Children**

This service caters for the needs of all sight impaired children up to the age of 16.

#### Staff

All teaching staff appointed to the service are required to qualify as teachers of visually impaired people. In addition to the teaching staff, the service also employs Teaching Assistants, Technicians and Specialist staff to deliver mobility and independence skills.

The flexible use of a well-qualified and experienced team of staff together with a comprehensive range of resources and facilities allows pupils to be taught in the educational environment that is most appropriate to their individual needs.

#### The Support Teacher Service

Support teachers for children with visual impairments are based at Prince Edward Primary School. They provide a city wide Service to visually impaired children and their families including pre-school children, children in mainstream schools, and pupils placed in special schools who have visual difficulties in addition to other special educational needs. Members of the support team are available to give advice and support to schools and families as well as having direct contact with the children.

### **Support for Pre-School Children**

The Support Teachers responsible for pre-school children with visual impairments work with families of young children from the time the child's visual difficulties have been diagnosed. Often such children are placed in mainstream nursery schools with visits from the support teacher as appropriate. Where a child has other special needs in addition to their visual impairment, there is close co-operation with staff from other services.

### **Secondary Education**

Secondary aged pupils with a severe visual impairment may be offered a place in the Integrated Resource at Tipton Secondary School. The age of entry is 11 years and pupils can progress through the school to follow a wide range of GCSE courses. Pupils

within the Integrated Resource are included in mainstream lessons alongside their sighted peers wherever this is practical and in the interests of the pupils. For those who require a higher level of direct teaching by staff experienced in working with visually impaired pupils, a separate teaching area is used, but a strong emphasis is placed upon helping the pupils to develop those skills that will make a greater level of inclusion possible.

For students who wish to continue their education into the sixth form a number of options of subjects leading to 'A' levels are available.

### **Pupils with Additional and Complex Needs**

A child who is visually impaired and has additional special educational needs will be offered a place in whichever special school is felt to be most appropriate.

The Service offers support and advice to staff as well as direct contact with the child.

Relevant qualified staff from the Service will supply mobility and independence programmes appropriate to individual need.

### **Mobility and Independence**

All children involved with the Service are assessed for mobility and independence needs. Following assessment, they are taught according to need.

Programmes of work vary from familiarisation with the school environment to independent travel throughout Sheffield.

Staff will also deliver programmes of work in a child's home area.

Contact: Specialist Support Services  
'Visually Impaired Service'  
Mrs M Broadhurst  
Head of VI Service  
Tapton School  
Darwin Lane  
Sheffield  
S10 5RG

Telephone: **0114 267 1414**



## 16 And Over

### **The Sheffield College**

Sheffield's 'Sensory Impairment Service' for this age group is based at The Sheffield City College, Granville Road. The support offered to students with a visual impairment covers a wide spectrum of involvement depending on the needs of the individual student and the nature of the course. In addition to all the courses available in the FE and HE sectors, there are two specialist classes - one for Braille and the other for Cookery.

Support consists of:

#### Classroom Support

A support lecturer works alongside the student to facilitate full participation in class activities.

#### Additional Support

A support lecturer works on a one-to-one basis with the student with regard to coursework (see Technical Tutorial) and topics not related to the rest of the class, e.g. use of specialised equipment, Braille etc. Group sessions can be arranged covering aspects of leisure, socialising and counselling.

A rehabilitation officer teaches independent travel and life skills at home, to and from college buildings and in and around campus.

#### Adaptation of Materials

The transcription of course/lecture notes into Braille or print of a suitable size and clarity together with the production of audio materials, tactile diagrams, maps and models.

#### Loan of Equipment

The very specific nature of some of the equipment used by students means that it can be extremely expensive. Consequently, resources permitting, the service would be pleased to lend out and maintain such items for the duration of the course.

#### In-Service Training/Awareness Raising

Fundamental to the successful integration of students with a visual impairment is the guidance offered to course lecturers and fellow students. The support service is very willing to run in-service training and awareness raising sessions for appropriate lecturers.

## Technical Tutorial

A valuable contribution to past successes has been the willingness of colleges to arrange Technical Tutorials (usually on a weekly basis). Here the student receives an individual tutorial from a course lecturer in her/his specialist subject.

It could transpire that a student may at some time during a course make use of any number (if not all) of the previous facilities. The Visually Impaired Service sees as important its role of liaising with students, parents, lecturers, medical and careers personnel. Consequently it is hoped that from the earliest possible moment, the Service is notified of an application by a student with a visual impairment to ensure the optimum structure of support is available.

First contact with the college should be through 'Student Services' who will arrange an appropriate meeting with the Sensory Impairment Service.

Contact: Student Services  
City College  
Granville Road  
Sheffield  
S2 2RL

Telephone: (Switchboard) **0114 260 2600**

Telephone: (SI Dept) **0114 260 3636**

Website: [www.sheffcol.ac.uk](http://www.sheffcol.ac.uk)

## Local Universities

Both universities in Sheffield have very good support services for sight impaired students. If you don't work because of your sight but are frustrated due to lack of stimulation, university may be worth looking at. First stop at Sheffield Hallam University, is 'Disabled Student Services', or at The University of Sheffield, 'Disability and Dyslexia Support Services', who will give you advice and information about how to proceed and what help is available. They will also advise you on the academic requirements needed to enrol. Mature and disabled students may not need the usual number of 'A' Levels to be admitted if you have appropriate life or work experience.

Some people choose to do an 'Access Course' first to make sure they get off to a good start, but this often isn't necessary.

## **Disabled Students Allowance**

If you do decide to 'go for it', you will undergo a needs assessment and if you live in Sheffield, a report will be sent to the Student Services Department of Sheffield City Council who will then (hopefully) agree a 'Disabled Student Support' package. This will include equipment, personal assistance and help with related costs, funded by a 'Disabled Students Allowance'.

Contact: The University of Sheffield  
Disability and Dyslexia Support Team

Telephone: **0114 222 1303**

Contact: Sheffield Hallam University  
Disabled Student Services

Telephone: **0114 225 3964**

## **Education Further Away**

### **Royal National College for the Blind (RNC)**

The RNCB claims to be "the UK's leading college of further education and training for people (16+) with sight impairment". They provide a range of full time programmes and short courses designed to prepare people for progression to Further Education, Higher Education and the world of work ... but most importantly... Life.

Accommodation is geared to the specific needs of each student. This includes on-site purpose made provision that includes all facilities a totally blind person, may need, to student houses near the college for independent students who want to take care of themselves.

The cost of courses and all expenses (including accommodation and even rail fares home) can often be covered by applying through your Job Centre Plus, who actually provide the funding.

Contact: The Royal College for the Blind  
Venns Lane  
Hereford  
HR1 1DT

Telephone: (General Enquiries) **0143 226 5725**

Helpline: **0143 237 6621**

Fax: 0143 284 2979

Website: [www.rncb.ac.uk](http://www.rncb.ac.uk)

E-mail: [info@rncb.ac.uk](mailto:info@rncb.ac.uk)

## **Queen Alexandra College (QAC)**

QAC is a College for people aged 16+ who have a visual impairment or another disability. Programmes include residential assessments, life skills, entry level qualifications, GNVQ, NVQ and Work Preparation. QAC also offers professional training services, Access to Work Assessments, Braille and tactile sign production and much more.

Contact: Queen Alexandra College  
Court Oak Road  
Harborne  
Birmingham  
B17 9TG

Telephone: **0121 428 5050**

Website: [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

## **RNIB Vocational College**

RNIB Vocational College, Loughborough works in partnership with the neighbouring Loughborough College of further education offering a wide range of vocational and educational opportunities for visually impaired people. It has fully supported access to a wide range of courses at Loughborough College allowing students to gain nationally recognised qualifications.

The Vocational College offers specialist courses at Foundation level as well as training in Business Administration (including audio-word processing and telephony) and Information Technology at NVQ Level. Access courses also prepare students for mainstream further education.

Its Outreach Service offers support to students at other Colleges, short courses and on-the-job training.

Accommodation for students is available in its purpose built halls of residence or in RNIB houses in Loughborough.

Contact: RNIB Vocational College  
Radmoor Road  
Loughborough  
LE11 3BS

Telephone: **0150 961 1077**

Website: [www.rnibcollegel.ac.uk](http://www.rnibcollegel.ac.uk)

## **Related Services**

### **ABAPSTAS**

ABAPSTAS was founded in 1970 by a small number of visually impaired people with the primary aim of supporting students, teachers and lecturers. Since then, ABAPSTAS has grown into a national self-help and campaigning organisation with a strong voice. Their main focus is still on education and employment but members now include people who have moved into careers other than teaching.

The main event of the year is their annual conference, which is held over an autumn weekend. ABAPSTAS produce a magazine four times a year. This gives information about the work of current campaigns, individual experiences as well as news and opinions.

Contact: ABAPSTAS,  
B.M. Box 6727  
London  
WC1N 3XX

Telephone: **0148 469 0521**

Website: [www.abapstas.org.uk](http://www.abapstas.org.uk)

## **Employment**

### **Confused?**

Don't even try to understand which of the following services is the best one for you. The current strategy for meeting the needs of disabled people either in, or seeking work, has evolved over a number of years and it has gradually become more and more confusing.

That said, there has never been more support and funding available to help us either into work or to keep our jobs if we are struggling to cope. The 'Disability Discrimination Act' is also doing its bit on our behalf, so if you want a job, now's the time to do something about it.

Here are the organisations and schemes currently available, in the first instance though, it may be best to ring the 'Disabilities Services Team (see below) for their advice.

## **Disabilities Services Team (Job Centre Plus)**

This dedicated (but small) team provides practical advice, support and assistance to both working and unemployed people seeking work. One of their responsibilities is to carry out individual assessments in order to match people with suitable employment opportunities or schemes. The team are often involved in negotiations with employers on behalf of employees when issues need sorting out.

Contact: Jobcentre Plus (Sheffield)  
Telephone: **0114 203 3000**

## **Access to Work**

The 'Access to Work' scheme which aims to help people overcome barriers to work resulting from their disability, is now a separate part of the DWP. Assistance at work can be provided by a funded support worker, if you need practical help. Subsidised enabling equipment can also be provided so you can carry out your duties unaided. This can include items as small as magnifiers, or lamps and as large as free-standing CCTV units worth thousands of pounds, at no cost to you and little cost to your employer.

'Access to Work' is available to employed, self-employed and unemployed people.

Contact: Access to Work  
Telephone: **0345 268 8489**

## **Work Choice**

Work Choice can help you get and keep a job if you're disabled and find it hard to work. It's voluntary - you don't have to do it. The type of support you get depends on the help you need. This is different for everyone but can include:

Training and developing your skills  
Building your confidence  
Interview coaching

Contact: Jobcentre Plus (Sheffield)  
Telephone: **0114 203 3000**

# Enabling Equipment

## **General Products**

There are catalogues full of daily living aids for sight impaired people. These products range from large print stickers for your PC keyboard, to talking clocks, scales, microwaves, radios and even a radar equipped cane, the 'Ultra Cane' which can warn of obstacles ahead and indicate distance and height through a vibrating button. Call in at SRSB Resource Centre or the Ravenscroft Centre to see a selection of what is available.

There is a vast choice of equipment and computer software available to help you carry on living as normal a life as possible. Some will be of no use whatsoever, depending on your particular condition and severity of sight loss, but there are some great products out there that you will find invaluable.

## **Magnifiers and more**

A simple optical magnifier may be all you need for general reading and these can be as cheap as £1 from the nearest 'Pound Shop' but more sophisticated versions with increased magnification, wider viewing area, built in lights and stands are also available through specialist suppliers such as SRSB and local company "SW Retail".

If you find conventional optical magnifiers fail to meet your needs, you may consider buying an electronic magnifier.

There are three types in common use:

1. Self-contained TV Magnifier or flat screen monitor type, (referred to generically as CCTV magnifiers) with movable book holder either underneath or just in front. These fit nicely onto a desk.
2. Handheld Video Magnifier which is hand-held like an ordinary magnifier.
3. The hand held scanner which plugs into a domestic TV set or computer. This is the lightest option with various options for magnification level.

These types of equipment are only available from specialist companies and are relatively expensive so you should ask for a demonstration or trial period before buying. Initially, you should be able to see units in daily use at (for example) SRSB's Equipment Centre. Another way of trying before you buy is to visit one of the

many exhibitions held throughout the year, where you can compare similar products from different manufacturers. See the separate section on exhibitions for more details. SRSB also stock a wide range of equipment including talking clocks and watches, talking labels for tins and other packages, electronic and optical low vision aids at reasonable prices

## **SW Retail**

Local company "SW Retail" are probably the only other convenient local supplier of enabling equipment. Personal callers are advised to telephone in advance

Contact: IC VISION LTD  
SW Retail LTD  
PO BOX 4787  
Sheffield  
S35 5BW

Telephone: **0122 676 2513**

Website: [www.icswretail.co.uk](http://www.icswretail.co.uk)

## **Cobolt Systems Ltd**

This is a UK company specialising in the design, manufacture and supply of innovative aids for sight impaired people. They can supply a printed catalogue with photographs of their complete range, all of which can be ordered direct.

The company has developed a number of products themselves. They designed the world's first talking kitchen scales, talking microwave oven, talking time switch, talking calendar clock and talking tape measure. They have developed their own high quality speech system which is used in all the products which they manufacture themselves. Rather than using synthetic speech this system uses digitised human speech and is much more pleasant to the ear. Talking watches, clocks and innovative voice note recorders are also available, some of which can be viewed at SRSB's Resource Centre.

Contact: Cobolt Systems Ltd  
The Old Mill House  
Mill Road  
Reedham  
Norwich  
Norfolk



NR13 3TL

Telephone: **0149 370 0172**

Website: [www.cobolt.co.uk](http://www.cobolt.co.uk)

## **Computers**

The abundance of helpful information now available on the Internet plus Email, which has now largely replaced letter writing, are just two of the many reasons why computers are becoming a 'must have' for many sight impaired people. Choosing the correct computer and software can be a difficult task especially for people with poor eyesight. Good PCs are available at bargain prices on the High Street, but getting the right software for a low vision user is another thing.

There are a growing number of companies specialising in computers for visually impaired people, who will gladly give advice before they supply and install a system to suit your needs. They also offer training packages and good backup service.

Some partially sighted people may decide that they can save money by purchasing a PC first from a local retailer where there are stacks of bargains to be had and then sourcing the software only through a specialist. This can be a great way to save money but be aware that occasionally conflicts occur between a particular brand of PC and a software package, so be very careful to check out compatibility issues before you buy.

Tip: If you are partially sighted, get the biggest TFT monitor you can afford and experiment with screen resolution settings to optimise it for your particular needs.

## **Computer Software**

Screen reading software, which verbally tells you what is on screen and what you are typing is probably the most useful type of software for severely sight impaired users and its use becomes second nature once you are familiar with all the keystrokes. For partially sighted people, screen magnifiers may be a more appropriate solution. These simply enlarge whatever is on the screen to a point at which you can see what is going on.

Windows XP has a number of useful 'Accessibility Options' that may also help and these come free with your PC. You can enlarge your mouse pointer, or change its colour, and you can set up the Ctrl key so when you press it, a circle zooms in on screen to show you the

pointer's location. The colour scheme can also be changed to give higher contrast. The great thing about Windows XP is that each user of the PC can have a different setup, so the rest of the family can use the PC normally when they log on.

Here are a few established suppliers of hardware and software.

### Aspire

Telephone: **0190 476 2788**

Website: [www.aspire-consultancy.co.uk](http://www.aspire-consultancy.co.uk)

### Dolphin Computer Access Ltd

Telephone: **0190 575 4577**

Website: [www.dolphinuk.co.uk](http://www.dolphinuk.co.uk)

### Moving-Mountains Technology Ltd

Telephone: **0870 765 6000**

Website: [www.moving-mountains.com](http://www.moving-mountains.com)

### Sight and Sound Technology

Telephone: **0160 479 8070**

Website: [www.sightandsound.co.uk](http://www.sightandsound.co.uk)

### Techno-vision Systems Ltd

Telephone: **0160 479 2777**

Website: [www.techno-vision.co.uk](http://www.techno-vision.co.uk)

## **The Internet**

(See also 'Internet Media' for relevant website information)

Most sight impaired computer users find the internet (email in particular) invaluable and now, with appropriate enabling software, even totally blind people can use it to the full. For new PC users, we recommend basic training in how to get the best out of this exciting medium (although it's amazing just how much your kids can teach you).

This area is so dynamic that a list of courses available would soon be out of date, so the best people to speak to on this, are Social Services. They will have up to date information on what is currently available.

## **Getting On-line**

There are many companies offering low cost internet access, from the large multi-national companies such as AOL and Tiscali, to the

more local provider, such as Plus.Net based in Sheffield. SRSB use Plus.Net as they are very competitively priced, reliable, and have a low cost helpline.

AOL claim that their software is easier to use than what you get already installed on your PC. The disadvantage of this is that you get used to non-standard software and can only then use your own PC. Also, AOL email addresses tend to be a bit long or have random numbers included because each address has to be unique and AOL have so many customers.

A smaller internet provider will let you use the software that came with your PC. So once you have learnt to use it, you can switch computers more easily. Also, the email address will be nearer what you want it to say.

Tip: If you use the internet we **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you have up-to-date anti-virus and firewall software running automatically on your computer. It is also important to make sure you have the latest Windows security updates installed.

## **Audio Tools**

Sound recording and playback equipment can be invaluable to sight impaired people as a method of keeping notes, transferring information and organising things. Voice Recorders, Minidisk players and even talking PDAs are all now available at affordable prices. If you have a few thousand pounds spare, you can even buy a purpose made, high capacity organiser, designed specifically for blind or partially sighted users. Some even have special one-handed Braille input.

For advice, contact SRSB's Equipment Centre and if they can't help, they will advise you of an appropriate specialist company such as the ones detailed below.

## **Radio**

In the last 4 years or so, radio has undergone 2 changes, both of which are a boon to sight impaired listeners. Firstly, the launch of DAB Digital Radio and secondly, radio on demand via the internet.

### **DAB Digital Radio**

What's so wrong with FM you may ask. Well, if all you listen to is BBC Radio Sheffield, and you can get it without interference, don't bother changing. If, however you want a greater variety of stations,

particularly specialist music stations like Jazz FM, Planet Rock, and Classic Gold, you will love DAB!

## **Exhibitions**

Exhibitions play a very important role in the market place - especially in the often expensive computer and electronics field - as they provide the opportunity for people to try out and compare products without having to cope with sales pressure.

It would be a pity, for example, for someone to splash out £2,000 on a top of the range CCTV only to find out later that one costing around £250 would have been more than adequate for their particular needs.

There are numerous, but irregular exhibitions taking place all over the country throughout the year, so we are only giving details here about two regular annual events.

## **Sight Village**

This three day event takes place each year in Birmingham during the third week in July and is considered by many as being the main showcase of products and services consequently most British and many overseas companies and societies exhibit here.

Contact: Sight Village  
Telephone: **0121 428 5050**  
Website: [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

## **SRSB**

At least twice a year, SRSB allows one or two suppliers to display their product ranges for a day at their Centre. Details of these 'Product Days' can be found in the regular SRSB newsletter or in the Diary page of their Website.

Contact: SRSB  
Telephone: **0114 272 2757**  
Website: [www.srsb.org.uk](http://www.srsb.org.uk)

## On The Radio

### **Sheffield In Focus**

Produced and presented by local sight impaired people, 'Sheffield In Focus' is a weekly magazine style show broadcast by 'Sheffield Live Community Radio'. Of particular interest to visually impaired people living in Sheffield, the show is a mixture of news, information, product reviews, interviews and music. For the latest information about how and when to tune in, call the station.

Contact: Sheffield Live Community Radio  
15 Paternoster Row  
Sheffield  
S1 2BX

Telephone: **0114 281 4082**

Website: [www.sheffieldlive.org](http://www.sheffieldlive.org)

### **In Touch (BBC Radio 4)**

Broadcast each Tuesday evening at 8:40pm, this show has become a 'must hear' for most people with sight loss. Aimed at bringing the latest sight orientated news and in depth discussion on relevant topics, the show is not afraid of ruffling a few feathers. A magazine relating to the show is also available free.

Contact: The In Touch Office  
Room 4057  
Broadcasting House  
London  
W1A 1AA

Telephone: (Radio 4 Action Line) **0800 044 0440**

Website: [www.bbc.co.uk/intouch](http://www.bbc.co.uk/intouch)

## **On the Internet**

### **Overview**

The internet is a much richer source of sight loss related media, due to the relatively low cost of creating web sites and even internet broadcast operations.

Here is a selection of the best known sites worth checking out, but new ones are coming along all the time, so it's worth doing a search every few months to see what's new.

Tip: 'Soundings' is probably the best way of hearing about new media services as they start up. So give them a ring and ask for their free monthly audio magazine. (See below)

### **Insight Radio (formerly VIP on Air)**

Through your PC, you now have access to the first radio station in the UK for (and presented by) sight impaired people. Daily output offers a full range of programme types that are of particular interest to people with low vision.

Listen on-line at [www.insightradio.co.uk](http://www.insightradio.co.uk)

### **The Accessible Friends Network (TAFN)**

This is an excellent web based self-help organisation for sight impaired computer users and people who like technology. Members communicate in a number of ways but the most exciting of these is a real-time talk based system where you chat verbally to other members anywhere in the world using your internet connection. Worth noting is that the audio quality is particularly good and is limited only by the quality of each user's microphone. TAFN is a non-profit making, self-help organisation so the cost of their service is negligible.

Insomniacs will be pleased to know that the service is available 24/7. This really is the ultimate way to chat to distant friends and relatives. The only limitation is that all participants must have an internet connected computer and the special (free) software installed and running. Obviously, you also need a microphone and speakers as well.

Have a look on the Website: to see everything the service has to offer. You will be amazed.

Website: [www.tafn.org.uk](http://www.tafn.org.uk)

## **Radio on Demand**

The other great innovation of the last few years is 'Radio on Demand' exemplified by the BBC's internet radio player, which allows you to listen to any BBC radio program from the last 7 days whenever you want.

To use the service, all you need is an internet enabled computer and away you go. The service can be found via [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk). There are now thousands of radio stations available to listen to, live on the internet but as with 'Radio on Demand'.

## **Audio Description**

### **Audio Described Theatre Performances**

People with sight loss, often tend to miss or misunderstand much of the action and detail in theatre productions. Provided through headphones, audio description is an additional narration that fits between dialogue and describes action, body language, facial expression, scenery and costume plus anything else that helps a visually impaired person follow and enjoy the show. Both the Crucible and Lyceum theatres usually provide at least one audio described performance of each production. Contact Sheffield Theatres Box Office for more information.

Telephone: **0114 249 6000**

Website: [www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk](http://www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk)

### **Audio Described Cinema**

'Vue Cinemas' at Meadowhall, Sheffield offer both the '2 tickets for the price of 1' scheme (See 'Benefits' section for details) AND an audio description service on enabled films. To find out which films and screens are enabled on a given week, get in touch with Patrick at SRSB.

Tip: [yourlocalcinema.com](http://yourlocalcinema.com) is a great website, full of all the latest information on audio described cinema. Go to [www.yourlocalcinema.com](http://www.yourlocalcinema.com) for the latest news.

### **Audio Described DVDs**

The RNIB produce a wide selection of feature films and popular TV programmes on videos which have added narration to describe costume, scenery and on screen action. These videos can either be purchased or rented.

Contact: RNIB  
105 Judd Street  
London  
WC1H 9NE  
Telephone: **0303 123 9999**

## **Audio Described Television**

With the advent of digital television broadcasting, audio description is now becoming available to augment the normal TV output. In effect, a voice-over describes what is happening visually on screen. This is independent of the normal program dialogue. Some systems also vocally talk you through equipment setup and channel or menu information.

The BBC is the best source of information about what is available currently for Freeview users.

Website: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

At the time of writing, Sky TV offers a superior service with audio description already built in to the system as a switchable option. They also have a 'Disabled Customers Line' where you can get a great deal of help, including a CD version of the Sky Magazine in audio format.

Contact: Sky Disabled Customer Line  
Telephone: **0870 566 3333**

## **Audio Books, Newspapers & Magazines**

### **Sheffield Talking News**

This is a weekly compilation of articles from the Sheffield Star recorded in various formats. A monthly magazine is also produced. There is no annual subscription.

Contact: Sheffield Talking News  
c/o SRSB  
Mappin Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4DT  
Telephone: **0114 278 0440**



## **Talking Newspaper Association for the United Kingdom (TNAUK)**

This registered charity provides a wide range of quarterly, monthly and weekly publications on audio CD, full text, Daisy CD and audio download to visually impaired and other disabled people, who find reading difficult.

An annual subscription is charged (cost varies).

Contact: National Talking Newspapers and Magazines  
National Recording Centre  
Heathfield  
East Sussex  
TN21 8DB

Telephone: **0114 278 0440**

Website: [www.tnauk.org.uk](http://www.tnauk.org.uk)

## **The National Talking Express and Media Roundup**

This is a monthly stereo, audio magazine for sight impaired people. There is an annual membership fee of £5 to offset some of the cost of media etc. Benefits include, free advertising, competitions, entertainment and information. Media Roundup is what it says on the can. A magazine for sight impaired users of all media such as TV, Radio, film and the internet.

Tip: If you use the internet, you can listen free to both current and archive editions of both publications on-line. Even though you aren't a member, you can still enter competitions and place adverts etc.

Contact: NTE

Telephone: **0203 609 7255**

Website: [www.ntexpress.org.uk](http://www.ntexpress.org.uk)

## **Playback**

'Playback' is a very useful recording service providing newspapers, magazines and others a reading service and a tape library. They will record anything requested for an individual or non-government organisation if it is not available elsewhere, and providing copyright clearance has been given. The service sends out over 40,000 tapes each month with 20 regular publications.

The Playback library contains over 1,000 titles covering a wide range of subjects. Audio Described Videos are now also available on loan.

All parts of the service are available free to sight impaired people.

Contact: Playback Recording Service  
Centre for Sensory Impaired  
17 Gullane Street  
Glasgow  
G11 6AH

Telephone: **0141 334 2983**

Website: [www.play-back.com](http://www.play-back.com)

### **SRSB Audio Book Service**

Talking books on compact cassette and CD's are available on free loan from SRSB's Library and Information Centre.

### **RNIB National Library Service**

This is a postal audio book library ran by the RNIB. They have an extensive collection of more than 21,000 books. There is a £50 annual charge for this service. You can borrow as many books over the year as you wish with 6 books out at any one time. For more information contact RNIB.

Telephone: (RNIB) **0303 123 9999**

### **Calibre Audio Library**

This audio book library has well over 6,000 books available on MP3 CD, USB memory sticks and internet streaming. These mp3 CD's save space as a full book will fit on just one disc and most new CD players will play this format as well as DVD players. This service is free to people unable to read print but there is an initial charge of £35.

Telephone: **0129 643 2339**

Website: [www.calibre.org.uk](http://www.calibre.org.uk)

### **Sheffield City Libraries Service**

Sheffield's branch libraries have a great (and ever growing) selection of audio books in both audio CD and tape formats. If you need help making your selection, staff are more than happy to assist. If a title is at another branch or on loan already, you can reserve it in the same way as with ordinary books.

In addition to these normal services, if you are housebound, there is a special service which delivers and takes away books directly to and from your home.

If you are registered as visually impaired, all books, music and DVDs are free to borrow.

Contact: Sheffield City Lending Library  
Surrey Street  
Sheffield  
S1 1XZ

Telephone: **0114 273 4727**

Contact: Housebound Service  
443 Handsworth Road Sheffield,  
S13 9DD

Telephone: **0114 293 0013**

### **Good Times Direct**

Telephone: **0844 441 4626**

Website: [www.goodtimesdirect.com](http://www.goodtimesdirect.com)

### **Audible**

Telephone: **0800 496 2455**

Website: [www.audible.co.uk](http://www.audible.co.uk)

### **Large Print**

#### **The 'Big Print'**

Big Print a weekly newspaper now produced by RNIB, is prepared in slightly larger and bolder print than conventional newspapers. It contains international and national news, sport, giant crossword, television guide and recipes; in fact, everything you would expect from a good newspaper. It is available for a yearly, half yearly or a quarterly subscription.

Contact: Big Print  
RNIB  
PO Box 173  
Peterborough  
PE2 6WS

Telephone: **0800 124 007**

### **Large Print Books**

The three companies listed below can supply books in large print or audio tape and will send you their catalogues on request.

#### **Isis Large Print**

Telephone: **0186 525 0333**

Website: [www.isis-publishing.co.uk](http://www.isis-publishing.co.uk)

## **The Bible Society**

Telephone: **0179 341 8122**

# Holidays

## **SRSB**

Firstly, you should check out your local society. SRSB organise accompanied, group holidays for members, both home and abroad. Accommodation is always carefully selected to make sure facilities are suitable for sight impaired travellers, including guide dogs. Call in, or telephone the Mappin Street Centre for more details.

Contact: SRSB

Telephone: **0114 272 2757**

Website: [www.srsb.org.uk](http://www.srsb.org.uk)

## **The Royal Blind Society**

The Royal Blind Society has two hotels for sight impaired people. The Belmont in Llandudno (Telephone: **0149 287 7770**) and Bradbury Hotel in East Preston, West Sussex (Telephone: **0190 377 0339**). Grant assistance for holidays is available depending on circumstances.

Contact: The Royal Blind Society

Telephone: **0190 385 7023**

Website: [www.royalblindsociety.org](http://www.royalblindsociety.org)

## **Creative Travel**

This company organises group holidays for visually impaired people at numerous locations throughout the UK. A courier experienced in accompanying visually impaired people is present on every trip and the holidays incorporate outings on most days. The cost of the holiday includes insurance and transport door to door.

Contact: Creative Travel

Telephone: **0150 322 0422**

Website: [www.creative-travel.co.uk](http://www.creative-travel.co.uk)

## **Vision Hotels**

Vision Hotels manage three Hotels. They are The Cliffden Hotel in Teignmouth, Devon (Telephone: **0162 677 0052**), The Lauriston

Hotel in Weston super Mare (Telephone: **0193 462 0758**) and Windermere Manor in the Lake District (Telephone: **0153 944 5801**).

All cater for the needs of sight impaired people, their friends, relatives, carers and guide dogs. The experienced staff are specially trained to guide and assist guests and understand their needs. Facilities include guiding rails, talking clocks and talking lifts.

Contact: Vision Hotels  
Telephone: **0153 944 5801**  
Website: [www.visionhotels.co.uk](http://www.visionhotels.co.uk)

## **Traveleyes**

Traveleyes is a company that organises independent world travel for sight impaired people. They also publish a number of travel guides in an appropriate format.

Telephone: **0844 804 0221**  
Website: [www.traveleyes.co.uk](http://www.traveleyes.co.uk)

## **Quick Tips**

(Tips from fellow local sight impaired people)

As my sight gradually gets worse, I find using plain white crockery makes a big difference to me when trying to work out what is on my dinner plate.

I have brightly coloured 'Bump-Ons' on the controls of my cooker and washing machine so I can easily find the most used settings.

If you cannot watch TV and follow all the action, obtain a 'Digibox' that has an audio description option.

If you have a piece of good looking electronic equipment and cannot locate or remember the main buttons, use 'Locator Dots,' (small see-through stick-on dots), instead of 'Bump-Ons', so you can feel the button without spoiling the look of the equipment.

Get yourself a DAB radio that has vocal prompts such as the Pure Digital 'Sonus 1XT' model.

Make sure the lighting at home is very good. A task light on the dining table can make a great deal of difference to many sight impaired people when eating meals.

Avoid anything made of clear glass. It is difficult to see and if smashed, creates a real problem cleaning up the fragments. Coloured plastic is safe and easier to spot. You soon get used to the change.

Always carry proof of registration with you when taking advantage of discounts or concessions for disabled people. You will usually be asked for proof of eligibility, even if you look disabled.

In restaurants, always ask for a table that is lit well and if alone, don't muddle through, ask the waiter/waitress to read you the menu.

Black Gel pens or fine tipped marker pens offer the best contrast for partially sighted people still able to read and write.

If you used to enjoy going to the theatre, but are afraid you will no longer be able to enjoy it, book a performance that has audio description. (Detailed earlier in this book).

Ask your bank for free templates for your cheque book and paying in book. These have slots in exactly the right place for filling in the details.

If you are a gardener, put sliced ping pong balls on top of all canes standing vertically. The unprotected tops can cause serious injury if not seen when bending down.

Have a white or yellow line painted on the edge of all outside steps to improve their visibility.

A simple voice recorder is a very effective way of 'taking notes' and recalling them later.

# Conclusion

## **Never be Afraid to Ask**

Now you've read this book, you should have a good basic knowledge of the help available to you, both locally and nationally. However, there is only so much that support services can do for you and in many situations you will need to take the initiative yourself. When travelling around on buses, coaches and trains don't just try and muddle through. You may get away with it much of the time, but, aside from giving yourself unnecessary stress, you will eventually end up on the wrong bus or train, heading in completely the wrong direction. (We have all done it!!) All transport organisations now have Customer Services staff, trained to meet the needs of disabled passengers, so make full use of them.

When booking a holiday or flight, ask the travel agent to notify the appropriate airport, or hotel of your circumstances and needs.

In large stores, ask an assistant to help you, or at least take you to "Customer Services" so they can.

Don't try to hide your sight problem from family or friends as they will become your main source of help. Don't stop going to your favourite pub or club because you're afraid of bumping into things or spilling your drink. If friends know you have a sight problem, they will help you. If they don't realise, simply tell them you are having difficulty seeing and make sure they keep an eye on you. At a gig or concert, don't just put up with a poor seat. Ask if you can sit near the front so you can see what is going on.

Get into the habit of walking routes with 'Pelican Crossings'. If you can't see the green man, most new crossings have a small 'knob' facing downwards, below the right-hand button box. This will swivel when it is safe to cross.

Never take risks when crossing other roads. If unsure, simply wait a little longer to be certain there are no cars or bikes coming. A good tip is to cross away from road junctions when practical, to avoid confusion.

At the time of your initial visit from Social Services or SRSB, you may be offered a symbol cane even if you are only partially sighted. Don't be shocked, this is a visual tool. It is NOT for tapping along the pavement with. It is just a sign to indicate to others (pedestrians,

shop assistants, motorists, bus drivers etc.) that you can't see properly. They will then realise you may need additional help or consideration.

The larger, more robust cane that you may need for navigation if you are severely sight impaired, is only issued along with training and support from a Rehabilitation Officer. This type is not to be confused with the smaller, thin 'symbol cane'.

Finally, always remember the words at the beginning of this book. **DON'T PANIC!** You aren't alone. SRSB is open weekdays from 8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. If you ever need help, advice, information or support, either call in, or ring us on **0114 272 2757**



## Key Phone Numbers

ABAPSTAS	0148 469 0521
Access to Work	0345 268 8489
Action for Blind People	0207 635 4800
Audible	0800 496 2455
Blind Veterans UK (Head Office)	0207 723 5021
Blind Veterans UK (Sheffield)	0114 267 2550
Cairn Home	0114 266 1536
Calibre Audio Library	0129 643 2339
City Wide Care Alarms	0800 013 0980
Cobolt Systems Ltd	0149 370 0172
Community Transport	0114 276 6148
Creative Travel	0150 322 0422
Disabled Persons Railcard Office	0845 605 0525
Family Fun	0190 462 1115
Good Times Direct	0844 441 4626
In Touch (BBC Radio 4)	0800 044 0440
International Glaucoma Association, London	0123 364 8170
Isis Large Print	0186 525 0333
Jobcentre Plus (Sheffield)	0114 203 3000
Karen Dolling	0114 226 1262
LOOK National Office	0121 428 5038
Low Vision Service	0114 271 3021
Nystagmus Network, Newark	0845 634 2630
Ophthalmic Out-patients Department	0114 271 3930
Playback Recording Service	0141 334 2983
QAC	0121 428 5050

RNC	0143 226 5725
RNIB	0303 123 9999
RNIB College Loughborough	0150 961 1077
Royal Blind Society	0190 385 7023
Sensory Impairment Team	0114 273 4977
Sheffield Box Office	0114 249 6000
Sheffield City Council, Council Tax	0114 273 6777
Sheffield City Lending Library	0114 273 4727
Sheffield City Library Housebound Service	0114 293 0013
Sheffield Hallam University Disabled Student Services	0114 225 3964
Sheffield Live Community Radio	0114 281 4082
Sheffield Talking News	0114 278 0440
Sky Disabled Customer Line	0870 566 3333
SRSB	0114 272 2757
SW Retail / IC	0122 676 2513
Talking Newspaper Association for the United Kingdom (TNAUK)	0143 586 6102
Tax Credits	0345 300 3900
Telephones for the Blind	0173 724 8032
The Albinism Fellowship, Burnley	0128 277 1900
The Bible Society	0179 341 8122
The British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society, Buckingham	0845 123 2354
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association	0845 372 7424 or 0118 983 5555
The Macular Disease Society	0126 435 0551 or 0845 241 2041
The National Blind Children's Society	0845 372 7332

The National Federation of the Blind UK	0192 429 1313
The National Talking Express and Media Roundup	0203 609 7255
The Partially Sighted Society	0844 477 4966
The Retinoblastoma Society, London	0207 377 5578
Torch Trust for the Blind	0185 843 8260
Traveleyes	0844 804 0221
TV Licence	0300 790 6131
University of Sheffield Disability and Dyslexia Support Team	0114 222 1303
VI Service (Over 16)	0114 260 3636
VI Service (Under 16)	0114 267 1414
Vision Hotels	0153 944 5801



