

Supporting you with your sight loss

This information is in addition to factsheet CCH5 – Information for People Registered Disabled with South Gloucestershire Council. It aims to help anyone with a visual impairment to get the right support from South Gloucestershire Council and our partners.

What is Visual Impairment?

Loss of sight can be caused by a wide range of conditions including glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetes, cataracts, retinitis pigmentosa and strokes. You can get specific information about these conditions from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) or Action for Blind People. These organisations are based together at:

Still House Lane
Bedminster
Bristol
BS3 4EB
Tel: 0117 9537750
Fax: 0117 9537751
Email: Bristol@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

If you have sight loss you may:

- be worried about not being able to see clearly or not at all
- be worried about your eyesight getting worse and making you feel isolated
- not have many contacts with other people

- have difficulty reading and dealing with correspondence
- have difficulties in finding your way about, or not be able to use various pieces of equipment such as kitchen appliances
- require support with children or with caring for others
- need some advice and support with employment
- require access to information about benefits and budgeting
- require information about support in the home, including equipment to make life easier
- require counselling to come to terms with your change in circumstances.

One in 30 of the UK's population is visually impaired but only 4% of visually impaired people have no sight at all.

Regular eye tests (annually for children and over 60's and every two years for 16 – 60 years olds) by a qualified optician are key to tackling and treating conditions early. If you are worried about your sight, contact your local optician as the first step and they may be able to correct it. If your optician identifies anything that they are unable to deal with, your GP should refer you for treatment to a specialist eye clinic at Bristol Eye Hospital.

Getting diagnosed

The specialists at the Eye Hospital will diagnose your eye condition and talk you through any available treatments. You will be asked to return for a follow up appointment and treatment as appropriate. If there is no treatment available you may be discharged from the Eye Hospital but it is important that you continue to attend regular check-ups with your optician.

The Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) at Bristol Eye Hospital can help support you and give information to any patient with reduced vision, including information about Low Vision clinics and free equipment loans for things such as magnifiers. You can ask your doctor or consultant to refer you to the ECLO at any time. The ECLO also has strong links to the voluntary and community support available.

Being registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired

If your sight cannot be improved with treatment and you are within the appropriate criteria, the specialist at the Eye Hospital may suggest that you are registered with a Certificate of Visual Impairment as blind or severely sight impaired or partially sighted or sight impaired. Being registered does not necessarily mean you will lose all of your sight. Nine out of ten people registered severely sight impaired (SSI)/blind have some sight.

There are some financial benefits linked to registration:

- blind persons tax allowance
- 50% reduction on TV licence fees

You can find out more information on these by visiting

<https://www.gov.uk/blind-persons-allowance/how-to-claim>

or

<http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/for-your-home/blindseverely-sight-impaired-aud5>

If you are registered blind or SSI you can also get:

- bus and rail travel concessions
- free NHS sight test
- exemption from BT Directory enquiries (get more information here: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-benefits-and-concessions-concessions/free-directory-enquiries-195>)
- leisure concessions – Call 0303 123 9999 for more information
- car parking concessions: The Blue Badge Scheme

You can register for a Certificate of Visual Impairment at any time after diagnosis and your GP can refer you to the hospital to explore this further.

If you agree to registration you will meet with the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) at Bristol Eye Hospital who will complete the forms with you and explain the process. They can also provide advice on local services and support available to you. The forms will be signed off by your consultant and South Gloucestershire Council's Department for Children, Adults and Health will receive notification

from the Eye Hospital and place you on the visual impairment register. The Council will contact you to confirm your registration.

If you feel you would benefit from further support, you will then be contacted by Bristol City Council (which has an agreement with South Gloucestershire Council) to do an assessment of your needs, issue you with the required equipment and refer you on to other sources of help to suit your individual needs.

You do not have to be registered to receive services from either South Gloucestershire Council's Department for Children, Adults and Health or most of the services offered by Action for Blind People.

Bristol Eye Hospital

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer	0117 342 9097
Patient Support Nurse	0117 342 9098
A&E Triage Line	0117 342 4613

Help for People with Dual Sensory Impairment

Dual sensory impairment is when people have sight loss and hearing loss. The two main organisations who provide tailored support, advice, information and services to dual sensory impaired people, their families, carers and the professionals who work with them are Sense and Deafblind UK.

Sense is a national charity that supports and campaigns for children and adults who are deaf and blind.

Tel: 0300 330 9250

Textphone: 0300 330 9252

Email: info@sense.org.uk

Web: www.sense.org.uk

Deafblind UK is a national charity providing support services and campaigning on behalf of deaf and blind adults and their carers.

Tel: 01733 358 100 (Voice/Text)

Fax: 01733 358 356

Information and Advice Line: 0800 132 320 (Tel and Textphone)
Monday – Thursday - 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Friday - 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Email: info@deafblind.org.uk
www.deafblind.org.uk

What South Gloucestershire Council can offer you

If you are struggling to remain independent because of your sight loss, we can arrange for trained staff to visit you to find out what your needs are – this is called an assessment. The time you will have to wait for an assessment will depend on how urgent your needs are.

For advice or support or to arrange an assessment call the Customer Services Department (details below)

After the assessment, the council will let you know if they can offer services such as occupational therapy or home care. The criteria for deciding whether any services can be offered to you will be explained during the assessment.

You may be offered some of the following:

- information and advice about local and national services
- equipment
- rehabilitation/mobility training
- support to live independently including community meals.

As part of your assessment, any charges for services will be explained to you.

The council may refer you to Action for Blind People for specialist services.

Contact

South Gloucestershire Council
Department for Children, Adults and Health
Tel: 01454 868007
Website: www.southglos.gov.uk
Email: csodesk@southglos.gov.uk

Concessionary Travel Cards

Many people will be aware of the Diamond Travelcard which allows residents of South Gloucestershire to travel for free on buses between 9:00 am – 4:00 am, Monday to Friday and anytime on weekends and Bank Holidays.

South Gloucestershire Council has recently agreed to introduce an additional scheme which will be known as the Platinum Travelcard. The Platinum Travelcard is for residents who are registered on the South Gloucestershire Certificate of Visual Impairment Register and will allow holders to travel for free on buses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We are currently in the process of setting up the new administration systems for the Platinum Travelcard scheme. All those who are registered on the South Gloucestershire Certificate of Visual Impairment Register will receive a communication from the Council in due course with details of how to obtain their card, should they wish to have one.

For further details information about these travel cards, please contact the Concessionary Travel team:

Phone: 01454 868004

Email: contravel@southglos.gov.uk

Help and support from other local and community organisations

Action for Blind People

Action for Blind People is a national charity with a local focus, providing practical help and support to blind and partially sighted people of all ages.

Action for Blind People offer services which include:

- advice about applying for benefits
- information and guidance about living independently, accessing day to day living support, dealing with housing

issues, help with completing forms, putting you in touch with other organisations and applying for a personal budget to spend on the relevant care that best meets your needs

- technology advice and guidance service which includes drop in sessions to help with screen magnification and other IT support
- support to help you access employment or start up your own business
- assistance to enable children and young people to gain access to education, leisure and sporting activities
- free counselling services
- rehabilitation to enable people to achieve independence
- a resource centre which provides information about local services and the chance to try out equipment
- information about local support groups.

Action for Blind People also organises outreach information and Living with Sight Loss sessions in South Gloucestershire. Contact them to find out if there is one planned near you.

Action for Blind People South West

10 Still House Lane

Bedminster

BS3 4EB

Tel: 0117 953 7750

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Email: Bristol@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Group for the visually impaired in Yate and District

Meets on alternate Tuesdays from 2.30 - 4.00pm at the Fire Station, Station Road, Yate. Meetings generally consist of a talk on various subjects, followed by questions and discussion. New Members are welcome. Carers and Guide Dogs also welcome to attend.

For further details of dates and other information please contact Gay Williams at 01454 321749.

Chipping Sodbury Macular Support Group

The group meets on the third Monday of every month from 13:30 to 15:30. The venue is the Watkins Room in the Old Grammar School, High Street, Chipping Sodbury BS37 6AH. This is within a few yards of the bus stop at the Clock Tower in High street which is convenient for those who are unable to drive. The group is open to **anyone (including their carers) who has visual problems** but particularly those with Macular Disease. Speakers attend the meetings on a variety of subjects, including the use of visual aids and members' personal experiences in dealing with sight impairment. The group is always looking for new members.

For more information, please contact lowvisioncs@outlook.com

Community Transport Scheme – South Gloucestershire

There are a number of passenger transport schemes running in South Gloucestershire that are owned and operated by local community groups. Some include fully accessible minibuses for hire by community groups and dial-a-ride services for door to door transport for individuals. They are set up to serve people who do not have access to conventional public transport or are unable to use it. Services are provided on a not-for-profit basis. They also run social outings to places of interest.

Four Towns and Vale Link Community Transport

Four Towns and Vale Community Transport provides a service to people living in Filton, Patchway, Stoke Gifford, Thornbury and Bradley Stoke. Groups and individuals must register first in order to use the service. There is a registration charge for groups. Contact:

Four Towns and Vale Link Community Transport
Norman Scott Park, Coniston Road, Patchway, South
Gloucestershire, BS34 5JR
Tel: 01454 868529
E-mail: info_4tt@yahoo.co.uk
Website: www.4ttl.org.uk

Kingswood Community Transport

Old School House, Kingswood Foundation, Britannia Road,
Kingswood, South Gloucestershire, BS15 8DB.

Tel: 0117 961 6061

Website: www.kingswoodct.org.uk

Areas covered include Acton Turville, Bitton, Cadbury Heath,
Downend, Frenchay, Hanham, Marshfield and Pucklechurch. To
make use of their services you will need to enrol as a member of
the scheme.

Green Community Transport

The Yard, 390 North Road, Yate, South Gloucestershire, BS37
7LW.

Tel: Ring and Ride 0845 241 0985

Office: 01454 228 706

Email: admin@greencommunitytravel.co.uk

Website: www.yate-ct.org.uk

Green Community Transport operates a number of vehicles from
Yate going to the west as far as Badminton Road and as far north
as Wotton-Under-Edge.

Car Schemes

Hawkesbury Voluntary Transport

Tel: 07972 065 665

Other Sources of Information and Support

RNIB National Helpline

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Website: www.rnib.org.uk



Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

Provide mobility services to blind and partially sighted people; breed and train guide dogs and also deliver confidence building rehabilitation services to adults and children and young people.

If you are interested in applying for a guide dog the first step is to call the local office in the South West on 0345 143 0204.

My Guide Service

My Guide is a new sighted guiding service aimed at helping people with sight loss to get out of their homes and engage with their community, rebuilding their confidence and independence. The service is delivered by fully trained volunteers. For more information or to apply to be a My Guide volunteer call the local office in the South West on 0345 143 0204

Services for Children and Young People

We help children and their families tackle the challenges of young sight loss so that they can enjoy their childhood and realise their potential as adults. The services we deliver support children and families from birth through to young adulthood (25).

Contact:

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
10 Still House Lane, Bedminster, Bristol, BS3 4EB
Tel: 0345 143 0204
Website: <http://www.guidedogs.org.uk>

International Glaucoma Association

Woodcote House
15 Highpoint Business Village
Henwood
Ashford
Kent
TN24 8DH
Telephone: 01233 64 81 64
Telephone – Sightline – Monday – Friday 9:30 am – 5:00 pm –
01233 64 81 70
Email: info@iga.org.uk
Website: www.glaucoma-association.com

Support for your carer (if applicable)

Carers Support Centre

The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, South Gloucestershire,
BS16 2QQ

Tel: 0117 939 2562

Fax: 0117 965 5847

Email: admin@carers-bs.org.uk

Website: www.prtcarserscentre.org.uk

Help and information on the internet

www.wellaware.org.uk

Tel: 0808 808 5252

Your guide to health, wellbeing and community services in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset. This site and telephone number offers a wealth of information on local services.

What if I am not happy with the service I'm getting?

In the first instance you should speak with the team or service involved. Most problems can be sorted out quickly this way. You can ask a friend or relative to do this on your behalf if you wish.

For Further information about making a complaint ask for Factsheet CCH82 - Your Experience counts. Or, you may wish to contact the Complaints and Freedom of Information Team:

Freepost RTCT-JXLE-EETT

South Gloucestershire Council

Children, Adults and Health - Complaints and FOI Team

Civic Centre, High Street

Kingswood

BRISTOL

BS15 9TR

Phone: 01454 865924

Fax: 01454 865940

E-mail: CAHfeedback@southglos.gov.uk