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). These organisations are based together at:

Still House Lane Bedminster Bristol BS34EB
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
- leisure concessions - Call 030 123 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 1421 Patient Support Nurse 0117 342 3328
A&E Triage Line 0117 432 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 eligible residents of South Gloucestershire to travel for free on buses.

South Gloucestershire Council has introduced an additional scheme the Platinum Travelcard. The Platinum Travelcard is for residents of South Gloucestershire, who are severely sight impaired or sight impaired.

Platinum Travelcard holders will be able travel free of charge at all times, however any journeys commencing before 9am, must
start within South Gloucestershire.

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

Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB)
RNIB is a national charity with a local focus, providing practical help and support to blind and partially sighted people of all ages.

RNIB 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.

RNIB 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.
The Yate Low Vision Group

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.

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.4tvl.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: 030 123 9999 Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://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](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)

**International Glaucoma Association**
Woodcote House  
15 Highpoint Business Village  
Henwood  
Ashford  
Kent  
TN248DH  
Telephone: 01233 64 81 64  
Telephone - Sightline - Monday - Friday 9:30 am - 5:00 pm - 01233 64 81 70 Email: [info@iga.org.uk](mailto:info@iga.org.uk) Website: [www.glaucoma-association.com](http://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](mailto:admin@carers-bs.org.uk)  
Website: [www.prtcarerscentre.org.uk](http://www.prtcarerscentre.org.uk)

**Help and information on the internet**
[www.wellaware.org.uk](http://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 RTXL-YHGY-GSYS**
South Gloucestershire Council
CA&H Department - Customer feedback
Council Offices
Badminton Road
Yate
BRISTOL
BS37 5AF

Phone: 01454 865924
E-mail: CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk