

Information for Parents of Children/Young People: VI Service



Introduction

This booklet is written for parents of children/young people with vision impairment (VI) and offers information about the services that may be provided by the Vision Impairment (VI) Service as part of their Local Offer. Local Offers vary between local authorities but this is what you should be able to expect from your LA's service.

About the information in this booklet

The booklet is made up of 11 pages.

The support provided by the Service can be divided into eight outcome categories and these are illustrated in one signpost image on page 3. The eight outcome categories form part of the core and additional curriculum for children and young people with VI. (E.g. learning to access, getting around, meeting others, participation)

Following this the next 8 pages illustrate each of the eight outcome categories and summarise **What, Why** and **How** the services are delivered to your child to achieve the outcomes.

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**Learning to
access**

**Use of
equipment**

**Independence
& negotiation
skills**

Participation

**Meeting
others**

**Getting
around**

**Looking after
him/herself**

**Life after
school**

**Your child's eight
learner outcomes**



Learning to access

Outcome description: This means your child can access information independently: E.g.

- Print readers: Use Low Vision Aids (LVA) through a range of means
- Tactile readers: Have advanced tactile skills to access both Braille and tactile graphics
- Sensory efficiency skills are maximised e.g. use of vision, tactile skills to access school work
- Able to organise their school work, e.g. folders, files

What we will do: We will co-ordinate your child's support. This will be done by a Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairments (QTVI) and will include:

- Assessment of functional vision
- Provision of specialist training and teaching as required:
- Braille and tactile access
- Low vision skills
- Organisation skills

Why: We want to successfully include your child within their setting alongside other children and young people. We think it is important that your child learns a range of skills to enable them to access in the same way as other children and young people. This means they will be able to:

- Access the curriculum independently without reliance on others to provide accessible formats
- Select the best way to access a task or activity in a particular situation

How: By providing specific types of support to meet your child's needs and enable their independent access to the curriculum. This may include:

- Provision of appropriate advice and strategies to your child's setting
- Direct support in lessons
- Adaptation of the curriculum
- A multi-sensory intervention programme
- Teaching independent access skills – Braille, touch typing, IT skills

Using equipment

Outcome description: This means your child is able to use a range of equipment efficiently, and is able to choose which equipment to use when. For example:

- Assistive technology
- Standard equipment with accessibility options
- Low vision aids (LVAs)

What we will do: We will teach your child the skills they need to be able to use their assistive technology and equipment independently.

We will teach your child how to choose which equipment to use and when.

Why: Having the right equipment is important as it helps to give your child equality with fully sighted children and young people, by providing ways for them to access, record, store and retrieve information independently.

Being able to use equipment such as assistive technology is even more important for a young person when they are at college/university, or to help them to get a job.

How:

Low Vision Aids

We will:

- Carry out an assessment/direct to services which offer this
- In partnership with your child and their school we will plan the introduction and use of their LVAs
- Provide ongoing training for your child, as required
- Monitor and review the use of the LVAs by your child

Assistive Technology

We will:

- Assess and provide a plan to address how your child's assistive technology requirements will be met
- Monitor and review their access requirements
- Provide a specific programme of skills to help your child use their assistive technology independently

Independence and Negotiation Skills

Outcome description: This means your child:

- Is able to explain their vision impairment and support needs to others and can make a case for change if needed
- Can choose what to do when things don't go according to plan and use the most appropriate skill, approach or solution
- Knows where to go for help

What we will do: Teach age appropriate skills to enable your child to speak up for him/herself so that they can:

- Explain their vision and what they need to others
- Join in discussions and negotiate with staff about their support needs
- Use appropriate approaches and solutions when things don't according to plan
- Know where to find things out for themselves and know what choices are available to them

Why: It is important that your child learns how to stand up for him/herself and be able to explain to others what sort of support works best for him/her. Children and young people have told us how important it is for them to be consulted about their support, and to be treated as individuals.

Talking about their support can help your child to think more carefully about their own needs and what the best ways are to meet them. Being able to speak up is even more important when your child leaves school and goes to college/university or starts looking for a job.

How: By teaching your child appropriate independence and negotiation skills.

- We will complete an assessment of need and make an individual plan to meet your child's access requirements which may include visual, IT, Braille, tactile or multi-sensory skills
- We will support your child to recognise their strengths and write a script about their visual impairment (what can I see, knowing how to ask for/refuse help.)

Participation

Outcome description:

Your child can take part in all aspects of school life and feel socially and emotionally included.

Your child has the social interaction skills that enable him/her to feel confident when mixing with other children and young people and to make and maintain friendships.

Your child can join in activities outside lessons when s/he wants to do so.

What we will do:

We will teach your child the skills they need to participate in social situations, e.g. join and participate in a group conversation, listen and respond appropriately, talk to an individual friend, talk to adults.

Why:

It is important for your child's emotional and psychological wellbeing to feel included both in formal and informal settings, in and out of the school/setting.

Knowing how to talk to others, listen, empathise and interact positively, including how to cope and respond to any negative attitudes, play an important part in helping your child to be fully included.

How:

By:

- Providing structured activities for your child to consider the social situations they encounter and what they would like to find easier, or change
- Involving your child in developing a social and emotional well being plan which addresses their needs
- Teaching your child the specific social skills to enable them to participate full and feel included in their school/setting

Meeting others

Outcome description: Your child has opportunities:

- To meet with other children and young people with VI
- To experience a range of recreational and leisure activities and has the skills to participate in the activities that are of interest

What we will do:

We will provide opportunities for your child to:

- Meet with other children and young people with VI
- Experience a range of recreational and leisure activities which are appropriate for their age

We will teach your child the skills needed to participate in specific leisure activities.

Why: While children and young people with VI may have lots of fully sighted friends, it can sometimes be rather lonely being the only blind or partially sighted child or young person in a school. It can be helpful to have a peer group of other children and young people with VI as it provides the chance to share experiences as well as tips and strategies.

While it is possible to make mainstream sports more accessible, your child may also benefit from the chance to try out specialist sports such as goal ball, blind cricket or football, which gives them an opportunity to socialise with other children and young people with VI.

Taking part in extracurricular activities can help to develop social skills that will be crucial in later life. Taking part in sports/clubs can be a great way to achieve this.

How: By providing:

- Parent groups/parent and toddler groups/social activities for children and young people within the local authority
- Information to your child about local/regional/national events for children and young people with VI. E.g. sports and social activities, and holidays provided by local and national voluntary organisations
- Structured sessions to prepare and teach your child the skills necessary to participate in the activities

Getting around

Outcome description: Your child has independent mobility skills appropriate to his/her age so that they are:

- Able to get around familiar environments independently
- Confident in travelling alone
- Able to meet others outside of home
- Able and know how to get help if stuck

What we will do:

We will provide specialist mobility training from as early an age as possible which meets your child's needs.

Why:

Being able to get around and travel as independently as possible is essential for children and young people to make the move from school to college/university, employment and independent adulthood. They will need these skills to ensure they do not become socially isolated.

We know it is important to start at an early age because – as with everyday living skills – they then become second nature. It is much harder to start learning mobility skills at a later age.

How:

A specially trained person called a Mobility Officer or Habilitation Specialist will assess your child and provide a mobility programme that is age appropriate and which maximises their independent mobility and orientation skills. The programme may include:

- An initial environmental audit (assessment) of home or school, or any other environment your child frequents
- Teaching of cane skills, bus/train travel, road crossing and routes to and from school, routes around school, safe play or access to the local environment

Looking after him/herself

Outcome description:

Your child has the skills to look after him/herself and to carry out everyday living activities that are appropriate for his/her age.

What we will do:

Training will be provided in everyday living skills by our Mobility Officer/Habilitation Specialist. This may include: money management, doing laundry, personal care, shopping and cooking.

Why:

It is important that your child can do the same things as their friends and not rely on other people to do it for them. It is important that your child learns the skills to manage independently when they leave school and go to college/university – especially if s/he plans to live away from home.

Although living independently as an adult may seem a long way ahead, it is important that your child learns the skills as early as possible.

How:

By providing:

- An opportunity for your child to think about the everyday living skills that are important to them and to be involved in making a plan about what they are going to learn
- Individual programmes to teach your child everyday living skills. This may include: shopping, laundry, cooking, personal finances, personal hygiene, shaving and applying makeup, hair care, dressing appropriately for different occasions, information on benefits, bus travel concessions, advice and provision of aids and equipment to improve accessibility at home and school/setting

Life after school

Outcome description:

Your child approaches transition knowing what support is available to enable them to succeed at college/university and employment and how to apply for it.

What we will do:

We will support your child at transition to ensure the setting or place they are going to understand and know how to meet their needs.

Why:

We think it is important that your child plans ahead and has the right information to make informed choices; this means they can receive the right support at college/university and complete their studies and education.

How:

By providing:

- An overview of the type and amount of support your child may require at their next setting
- A transition action plan, outlining what needs to happen to ensure all relevant steps are taken and preparations are carried out, to assist a smooth transition. It may include the following:
 - Environmental audit and recommendations
 - Accompanying your child on visits to settings
 - Mobility programme to teach independent travel skills
 - Liaison with Learning Support Dept to discuss your child's needs
 - Teaching of independent living skills
 - Support at career guidance meetings and events
 - Information and links on Social Care Services, 'Access to Work,' financial support for students, Personal Independence Payment