

Information for people with a visual impairment



Bedford Borough Council and
Central Bedfordshire Council
working together

Contents

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| The Visual Impairment Team | 2 |
| Certification Process | 3 |
| Data Protection Act | 3 |
| Sight Concern Bedfordshire | 4 |
| Low Vision Aids | 4 |
| Royal National Institute of the Blind | 4 |
| Books, Newspapers, Magazines & Music | 5 |
| RNIB Talking Book Service | 6 |
| Free Local Talking Newspapers | 6 |
| Radio Programme | 6 |
| Children with a Visual Impairment | 7 |
| Further Education | 7 |
| Postal Votes | 7 |
| Local Transport Schemes for People with Disabilities | 8 |
| Employment | 8 |
| Resource Centres / Social and Self Help Clubs | 9 |
| Driving Licences | 10 |
| T.V. Licence Concessions | 10 |
| Useful Contacts | 11 |
| Useful Addresses | 13 |

The Visual Impairment Team

Sight plays an important part in our daily lives. It is a means by which we gain information and knowledge and it contributes towards our ability to communicate with each other. It facilitates our mobility and enables us to carry out a wide range of activities which we regard as ordinary and take for granted.

Visual impairment can present problems in every aspect of life. It may become increasingly difficult to cope at home or at work. Independence and mobility are threatened or curtailed. Self-confidence is affected and relationships with family and friends can become strained, leading to further stress and anxiety.

Sometimes the situation can be eased by discussing your eye condition with a Rehabilitation Officer. It can be helpful to consider alternative ways of doing many practical tasks e.g. cooking, reading, writing and getting about. Often simple changes at home such as improved lighting or the use of contrasting colours and decor can make it easier to manage. Support and advice can also be given to family and friends to enable them to understand and so cope more positively.

As a shared service the team provides information and advice on all aspects of visual impairment including: eye conditions, special equipment, communication, daily living skills, mobility, leisure, education and employment.

For further information please contact:

**Visual Impairment Team
Bedford Borough Council
Borough Hall
Cauldwell Street
Bedford, MK42 9AP
Tel: 01234 718318
Fax: 01234 276563**

Certification Process

When a person experiences problems with their sight, their doctor or optician may advise them to be seen by an Ophthalmologist (a specialist in eye conditions), at a hospital eye clinic for a thorough examination. This can result in advice and/or treatment, but for some people it may result in being certified as severely sight impaired/blind or sight impaired/partially sighted. Certification is done by the completion of a form known as CVI. A copy of the form is sent to Social Services, where a team of specialist workers make contact with the person to offer information, support, training and advice on a wide range of issues including: practical skills, financial benefits, mobility problems and local and national facilities. They keep a register of everyone who is certified (with the persons approval) to help the local authority to plan its future services.

It is worth noting at this point that to be certified as blind does not mean total loss of sight. Nor does it imply that one day all sight will be lost. Only about 4% of people on the blind register are unable to see at all, and of these, most have been blind since birth.

Data Protection Act 1998

Under the Data Protection Act Bedford Borough Council will safeguard your personal details and they will not be divulged to other individuals or organisations for any other purpose than for which they were given. We may disclose information under the Data Protection Act without your consent if it is considered necessary and in your best interest.

Sight Concern Bedfordshire

**Kings House
245 Ampthill Road
Bedford, MK42 9AZ
Tel: 01234 311555
Fax: 01234 314888**

This voluntary Society has two offices that provide a range of services for people living in Bedfordshire. These include: advice and information, form completion, home visiting scheme, bi-monthly newsletter (available in various formats), training courses for volunteers and carers and social clubs. Both offices have resource centres with a range of equipment on display.

Low Vision Aids

As many people who have been certified as visually impaired retain some useful vision, they can often be helped by low vision aids such as hand magnifiers, magnifying spectacles, and illuminated torch magnifiers.

Opticians usually have a selection of magnifiers for sale, but these can also be prescribed on loan through the NHS at low vision aid clinics. If appropriate, your ophthalmic consultant, doctor or optician can arrange for you to be assessed. Not all eye conditions can be helped by magnifiers, and it is also worth knowing that small magnifiers are more powerful than larger ones.

Royal National Institute of the Blind

This agency provides information and advice on all aspects of visual impairment.

**RNIB Helpline / Customer Services
PO Box 173
Peterborough PE2 6WS
Tel: 0303 123 9999**

Books, Newspapers, Magazines and Music

Your local libraries have a large collection of books and music available in a wide range of formats. It is worth noting that if you are unable to access a library they operate a housebound service. For further information please contact your nearest library.

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Bedford | 01234 350931 |
| Ampthill | 01525 402278 |
| Biggleswade | 0300 300 8055 |
| Flitwick | 01525 715268 |
| Dunstable | 0300 300 8055 |
| Luton | 01582 547440 |
| Leighton Buzzard | 0300 300 8059 |

Calibre Talking Book Library aims to provide the pleasure of reading to anyone who cannot read ordinary print books. The service is free to members.

Aylesbury
Bucks HP22 5XQ
Tel: 01296 432339

Talking Newspaper Association (TNAUK)
National Recording Centre
Heathfield
E. Sussex TN21 8DB
Tel: 01435 866102

TNAUK produce recorded versions of a wide range of national newspapers and magazines, (including Radio/T.V. Times). There is an annual subscription.

RNIB Talking Book Service This national organisation has an extensive library of recorded books that are available to people registered as blind or partially sighted. There is an annual membership fee, and although Social Services can provide help, this is subject to a financial assessment.

Queries about faults or repairs must be sent to:

MR P. ALBON
Talking Book Co-ordinator for Bedfordshire
Tel: 01234 782251 (home)
Tel: 01234 225520 (work)

Free Local Talking Newspapers

Recorded versions of several Bedfordshire newspapers are available by post each week. For further information on how to receive this service please contact:

Bedford Talking Newspaper (BDAN)
Mr David Mitchell Tel: 01234 218989
d.mitchell15@btinternet.com

Biggleswade Talking Newspaper
Mr David Gentle Tel: 01767 680143
david.gentle@tiscali.co.uk

Central Bedfordshire & Luton Talking Newspaper
alan.chalkly@sightconcern.org.uk

Radio Programme

BBC Radio 4 broadcasts a programme called "In Touch" for people with impaired sight on Tuesdays at 8.40pm.

Children with a Visual Impairment

The Visual Impairment Team are part of a network of people who provide information, advice and training to children with a visual impairment and their families and carers. For further information contact the team on:

Tel: 01234 718318.

Further Education

Barnfield College offer support on various main stream courses.

**Barnfield College
Additional and Learning Support Department
Tel: 01582 569718**

Postal Votes

People registered as blind are entitled to a postal vote at all local and general elections. Application forms can be obtained from your local Electoral Registration Officer. Alternatively, people can receive help from the Presiding Officer at the Polling Station, or a friend or relative. For further information contact the registration officer in your area:

Luton: 01582 546046

Dunstable: 0300 300 8008

Ampthill: 0300 300 8008

Bedford: 01234 221604

Local Transport Schemes for People with Disabilities

Dial-a-ride Tel: 01525 220044 Central Bedfordshire
(Houghton Regis, Luton)

Door-to-Door Tel: 01234 271087 Bedford Borough

Link-a-ride Tel: 01525 840511 Central Bedfordshire

Buzzer Tel: 01525 853566 Central Bedfordshire

Employment

The Employment Service has Disability Employment Advisors whose role is to assist people certified with a visual impairment to find suitable employment. This may be done through resettlement to more appropriate jobs within their present place of work, or in helping them to find alternative employment. The RNIB employs technical and professional officers who can advise workers and employers on the latest ideas and technology that can be used to maintain people with a visual impairment in a wide variety of jobs.

For further information contact your local Job Centre:

53-57 Bromham Road, BEDFORD 01234 361500

73 High Street, BIGGLESWADE 01767 275750

56 High Street South, DUNSTABLE 01582 685200

55 Guildford Street, LUTON 01582 744000

The Access to Work scheme acts on behalf of the individual to provide joint funding with employers for essential equipment and transport costs depending on length of service. Tel: 02084 263110

Resource Centres

**Sight Concern Bedfordshire
Kings House
245 Ampthill Road
Bedford, MK42 9AP
Tel: 01234 311555**

**Sight Concern Bedfordshire
1 Union Street
Luton, LU1 3AN
Tel: 01582 655554**

Social and Self Help Clubs

**Bunyan Centre
Mill Street
Bedford
Sight Concern
Tel: 01234 311555**

**Katherine Gardens
Ampthill
Sight Concern
Tel: 01234 311555**

**The Woburn Macular Disease
Support Group
Woburn Village Hall
Crawley Road
Woburn, MK17 9QD
Tel: 01525 750559**

**Red House Court
The Green
Houghton Regis**

**Sight Concern, Luton
Thursday Group
(Younger People)
Tel: 01582 655554**

**Sight Concern, Luton
Friday Group
(Older People)
Tel: 01582 655554**

**Sight Concern, Luton
IT Club
Tel: 01582 655554**

The transport schemes for people with disabilities listed on page 8 may be available to help you get to and from the clubs.

Information for Driving Licence Holders

If your sight is affecting your ability to drive or if the eye specialist has advised you that you are not safe to drive, you are required to contact the:

Drivers Medical Branch

DVLA

Swansea

SA99 1TU

Tel: 0300 790 6806 (Monday to Friday 8.15 to 16.30)

Failure to comply is a criminal offence. Drivers who do not meet the vision requirements and who come to the attention of the police may be liable for a fine of up to £1,000.

Reduction in Television Licence Fee

Customers who are registered blind are entitled to a 50% reduction in their licence fee. This includes eligible people living with family or other relatives. The person must be able to give verbal consent. Anyone over 75 is already entitled to a free licence.

The TV Licensing authority has issued new instructions asking for those who are applying for the concessionary licence for the first time to get in touch with them by phone on 0300 790 6130 on receipt of their TV licence renewal notice. They will then be asked to send a copy of their certificate of registration to TV Licensing, Blind Concession Group, Bristol, BS98 1TL, which TV Licensing will validate.

If you require a "Proof of Registration as Blind" letter when renewing your TV Licence please contact:

**The Visual Impairment Team
Bedford Borough Council
Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street
Bedford, MK42 9AP
Tel: 01234 718318**

Useful Contacts

Age Concern Bedfordshire

Offers help and support to people over 60 years of age. Services include information and advice as well as Home Help and Handyman schemes,

80-82 Bromham Road

Bedford

Tel: 01234 360510

Monday – Friday from 9.30 – 4.30

Deaf and Hearing Impairment Service

The team covers the whole of Bedfordshire, excluding Luton. They offer specialist social work and support to people of all ages who are experiencing hearing difficulties.

You will be offered an assessment of your needs and if you meet the eligibility criteria, they may be able to provide services to enable you to live as independently as possibly in the community.

For further information please contact the team at:

Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street,

Bedford, MK42 9AP

01234 276124 (phone)

01234 276186 (fax)

01234 228219 (minicom)

07748 760192 (mobile)

Bedfordshire Police Partnership Trust

Known as the Bobby Scheme, it aims to help elderly or vulnerable people by giving advice, support and practical help in improving their home security.

Tel: 01234 842619

Fire Precautions

The Fire Service will advise on home fire precautions and will fit free smoke alarms for elderly or disabled people.

Tel: 01234 845000

Telecare

The service provides a lifeline unit to enable people to remain in their homes.

Tel: 01525 840505

Useful Addresses

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Royal National Institute of the Blind 105 Judd Street London WC1H 9NE Tel: 08457 669999 (Helpline)</p> | <p>Royal National Institute of the Blind Customer Services PO Box 173 Peterborough, Cambs. PE2 6WS Tel: 0845 702 3153</p> |
| <p>International Glaucoma Association 15 Highpoint Business Village Henwood Ashford, Kent, TN24 8DH Tel: 0870 6091870</p> | <p>British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society PO Box 350 Buckingham MK18 IG2 Tel: 01280 821334</p> |
| <p>Moorfields Eye Hospital 162 City Road London EC1V 2PD Tel: 020 7253 3411</p> | <p>Guide Dogs for the Blind Association 7 Manor Road Woodford Bridge Essex IG8 8ER Tel: 020 8506 1515</p> |
| <p>Deafblind UK VanGeest Place Cygnets Road Hampton, Peterborough, PE7 8FD Tel: 01733 358100 Helpline: 0800 132320 (free call)</p> | <p>The Partially Sighted Society PO Box 322 Doncaster DN1 2XA Tel: 01302 323132</p> |
| <p>Macular Disease Society PO Box 1870 Andover Hampshire SP10 9AD Tel: 01264 350551 Helpline: 0845 2412041</p> | <p>National Federation of the Blind Sir John Wilson House 215 Kirkgate, Wakefield West Yorks. WF1 1JG Tel: 01924 291313</p> |
| <p>Action for Blind People 14 - 16 Verney Road London SE16 3DZ Tel: 020 7635 4800</p> | <p>National Library for the Blind Far Cromwell Road Bredbury Stockport SK6 2SG Tel: 0161 355 2000</p> |
| <p>British Talking Book Service P O Box 173 Peterborough PE2 6WS Tel: 0845 762 6843</p> | <p>Diabetes UK 10 Park Way London NW1 7AA Tel: 0207 424 1000</p> |
| <p>Advisory Committee for Blind Gardeners (THRIVE) The Geoffrey Udall Centre Beech Hill Reading, RG7 2AT Tel: 0118 988 5688</p> | <p>The Stroke Association Helpline Tel: 0845 30 33 100</p> |

All telephone numbers were correct at time of going to print. February 2010.

Disclaimer

The information is correct at the time of printing. The publishers are unable to accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions, inaccuracies, representations or false descriptions howsoever caused. None of the views or opinions expressed or implied herein are necessarily those of the publishers and furthermore, the publishers do not endorse any of the products, services or views referred to or represented herein.