

Hackney Community Services

Guide to Services for Visually Impaired People

Introduction

This booklet is produced by the Sensory Services Team at Hackney Community Services. It is for people who have a visual impairment and/or their families, friends, carers, etc. It aims to give practical information and advice about the registration process and about help or services available locally and nationally.

As space is limited this can only be an outline of help available, but it is a starting point. Other organisations will be discussed with you depending on individual circumstances and needs.

If the information you require is not included please contact us. We will be happy to help or point you in the right direction.

Our address and contact number is:

Sensory Services
205 Morning Lane
London, E9 6JX

Tel: 020 8356 5670, 020 8356 5671 or 020 8356 5646

New referrals are taken through the Call centre on –

020 8356 6262

All efforts have been made to ensure the information is correct at time of print.

A. What Is Registration?

After assessment of your eye condition, the hospital consultant completes the CVI form (previously the BD8 form), which certifies that you are eligible to be registered by your local Social Services department as either **severely sight impaired/blind** or **sight impaired/partially sighted**. Normally the consultant keeps one copy, you receive another and copies are sent with your consent, to the Community Services department and your GP. This information is confidential and is not passed on to anyone without your permission.

Community Services Departments have a statutory responsibility to maintain a register of blind and partially sighted people. Being registered as blind does not necessarily mean that the person is or ever will be totally without sight.

On receiving their copy of the CVI form (Certificate of Visual Impairment), a Rehabilitation Worker from Community Services should contact you to discuss your registration and advise you of services that may be available to you. Registration is purely voluntary and you should be asked by the Local Authority if you wish to be registered. Registration is necessary to qualify for some of the services provided both by national and local government departments and to enlist the help of some voluntary agencies.

You should note that the services of Hackney Community Services do not depend upon registration and are available to anyone experiencing difficulties arising from sight loss.

B. Eye Conditions

There are many different eye conditions which can impair vision. The effects and severity can also differ with each individual. You may for instance lose central vision or side vision, have patchy or blurred vision, see only light and dark or rarely have total loss of sight.

The process may be gradual over many years or sudden; it may be linked to other illnesses; it may be inherited; it may vary from day to day and it may or may not be helped by treatment.

C. A Brief Guide To Concessions

B – Blind PS – Partially sighted

B	P S	Free NHS sight test. (Also for anyone aged 60 or over)	Tell your optician about your registration before the test.
B	P S	Low vision aids (Such as magnifiers).	Ask your consultant or request referral to consultant via your GP.
B	P S	Free postage on items marked "Articles for the Blind".	For Braille items or recordings like Talking Books but not personal tapes or letters.
B		50% Discount on your TV licence.	Must be registered. Proof of registration required. Call Television licence helpline on 0870 5763763.
B		Free permanent loan of radio cassette and TV sound receivers by the British Wireless for the Blind Fund.	Must be registered. Issued only following an assessment of need by Community Services or the local voluntary society.
B		Blind person's personal income tax allowance.	Available to blind people. Can be transferred to your spouse on request.
B		Exemption from BT Directory Enquiry charges.	Ring 195 and ask for a PIN number.
B	P S	Car parking concessions under the blue badge scheme.	The car doesn't need to be yours. Contact Community Services. Partially sighted people must show they have problems walking.
B	P S	Railcard and other concessions on British Rail.	Pick up a leaflet from your nearest mainline station or call mobility unit on 0845 766 9999.
B	P S	Local travels concessions. Bus passes or taxi vouchers.	Must be registered. Contact Community Services for details of travel concessions in the area.
B	P	Special equipment, a	Can be provided under the Access

	S	reader or assistance at work and help with travel costs.	to Work scheme. Details from Jobcentres and RNIB Employment Network 0845 766 9999.
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D. A Guide To Benefits

Information on the full range of benefits can be obtained from the **Benefits Enquiry Line**, which can also assist with claim form completion. Tel: **0800 88 22 00**

There is no pension or specific benefits to which you are automatically entitled if you are registered as blind or partially sighted. However, the following is a list of Community Security benefits and allowances, which you may be able to claim:

Attendance Allowance (65yrs and over)
Disability Living Allowance (Before 65th birthday)
Carers Allowance
Disability Working Allowance
Additional Income Support
Additional Pension Credit
Incapacity Benefit
Additional Housing Benefit
Additional Council Tax Benefit
Working tax credit
War Pension

Financial Assistance towards NHS costs, i.e. new glasses, is available to people on income support or low income (request form HC11).

For more details contact: Local Benefits Agency (**see useful addresses**).

E. Aids & Equipment

Low Vision Aids

In addition to ordinary spectacles there are aids to seeing called Low Vision Aids (LVAs), e.g. magnifying glasses and other special lenses which are obtainable from the NHS. If you need help, discuss the issue with your GP, rehabilitation worker or Eye Specialist who may refer you to a Low Vision Aid Clinic. You can often get LVAs on free permanent loan from your local Eye Hospital.

Aids to Daily Living

There is a wide range of equipment available, which can help you to live independently. Your rehabilitation worker can offer you advice and practical help, such as adapting your existing appliances for your individual needs or through some equipment that may be loaned or provided by the team. Other useful equipment may be obtained through local shops or from catalogues especially for visually impaired people.

F. How Can I Help Myself?

There are three main ways you can help yourself, or a friend who has a visual impairment; **Size, Contrast and Lighting**. It is important to consider all of these areas.

Size - Generally, if you increase the size of an object or print, it is easier to see. If you write your telephone number in large numbers they will be easier to read, especially if you use black felt tip pens. You may find the use of a magnifier helps with size (contact your hospital or optician to find the best one for you). The Low Vision Clinic at your hospital may provide a magnifier for free. You need to ask your doctor to refer you for an appointment.

Contrast - If you put something dark against something light, it is usually easier to see. For example, dark red meat shows more on a light chopping board, and you can probably locate a door more easily if your door is dark and the walls are light.

Lighting - Everyone benefits from good lighting. This may not necessarily mean very bright light, but instead may mean little light in the correct spot. Try to read a newspaper with a spot lamp or table lamp shining directly onto the paper (not your eyes) and this will usually help. Your Rehabilitation Worker can advise and help with all of these areas, and these will be looked at during an assessment of need.

G. Useful Local Contact Addresses:

Support Groups and Contact points

Action for Blind people
14-16 Verney Road
London SE 16 3DZ

020 7635 4800
www.afbp.org

*Advice and services on Benefits, children, employment and training, equipment, accommodation, transport, leisure and your rights.

Age Concern - Hackney 0800 917 9830
22 Dalston Lane www.achackney.fsnet.co.uk
London E8 3AZ

*Drop in service, free helpline, befriending service, volunteer opportunities and computer facilities. Helpline Mon – Fri 9.30 – 5.30
Languages: Farsi, Kurdish, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu, English.

Alevi Cultural Centre and Cem-Evi 020 7241 6285
89 Ridley Road, E8 2NH

*Turkish community - education, welfare right, translation service.

Asian Woman's Advisory Service 020 8986 4804
Ground Floor, 161 Mare Street, E8 3RH

*welfare rights, housing, immigration, dept, befriending, counselling
Office open mon-thurs 10am-3pm,

Association of Blind Asians (ABA) 020 8962 2633
65 Bolsover Street 020 7388 2555
London WP1 7HL

*Social Events (monthly), monthly magazine in English/Hindi

Choice in Hackney 020 7613 3206
2nd Floor, D Block
St. Leonard's
Nuttall Street
London. N1 5LZ

*Advocacy and independent living services to disabled people aged 16 and over. Open Mon – fri 9.30 – 5.30pm.

City and Hackney Carers Centre 020 8985 1600
Unit 17, 11-20 Tudor Grove
London. E9 7BR

Hackney African Caribbean Disability Association 020 8525 1195
Alfred Heath Centre, 186 Homerton High Street

*Support group for African, Caribbean people with a disability living in Hackney.

Hackney Independent Parent Support Services 020 8985 1600
Unit 17, 11-20 Tudor Grove
London E9 7QL

*Provides information, support & advice to parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs

Jewish Care – Stamford Hill Community Centre 020 8800 5672
91-93 Stamford Hill
London. N16 5TP.

*Services include transport, activities, meals, chiropody, eye care, Social work support. Mon-Thurs 8.45 – 5pm. Fri 8.45-3pm. French, Hebrew, Yiddish spoken.

Look London 020 8678 0555
Kings Avenue School
127 Park Hill
London. SW4 9PA

*Affiliated to National Federation of Families with Visually Impaired Children, LOOK information, advice and support to parents of visually impaired children.

Metropolitan Society for the blind 020 7403 6184/6571
Lantern House
102 Bermondsey Street
London. SE1 3UB

*Visiting Service, radio service, escort service, grants for aids and equipment.

Organisation of Blind African Carribeans (OBAC) 020 7735 3400
1st Floor, Gloucester House www.obac.org.uk
8 Camberwell New Road
London. SE5 0RX

*Provides support, information and advice for visually impaired African-Caribbean people of all ages, specialising in welfare advice, housing, immigration and employment training.

RNIB 020 7388 1266
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
(customer services) 0845 705 3153

The Listening Eye 0800 783 1979

*The listening eye has now been set up to offer support for anyone with a sight problem or their carers throughout the UK. The service is available between 6 pm and 10 pm Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evenings on 0800 783 1979

The Sharp End 020 7739 7887

*offers activities to housebound older people in the Shoreditch Our Way area, also offer home visiting complementary healthcare scheme.

Benefits

Benefits Agency Enquiry Line 0800 882 200
Citizens advice bureau 0208 986 8446

Hackney Community Law Centre 020 8985 8364
8 Lower Clapton Road
London. E5 0PD

*Free legal service & Representation for those living or working in Hackney.
Open Mon- Fri 10 – 5.30pm.

Leisure and Recreation

Alan Weatherly, 020 7354 8666
Development Officer for visually impaired people
The London Sports Forum for Disabled People

Haringey Phoenix Centre (Marie Lang) 020 8889 7070
Winkfield Resource Centre
33 Winkfield Road, Wood Green N22
Activities, day trips and annual holidays. Contact for membership nomination.