

Managing Sight Loss

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Introduction

When you learn that your sight is deteriorating, you may react with disbelief, anger, shock and fear about the future. The thought of life with deteriorating sight is a difficult one.

Sight loss will bring changes to your life, but you can deal with these changes more easily if you know where to get help and support from people who understand what you are going through.

This booklet will point you in the right direction to get that help and support.

- Hampshire County Council's Sensory Services Team provide services for people aged 18 and over. For information about services for under 18's, please contact Hantsdirect on 0845 603 5630.

So who can I contact?

■ Your doctor

Your doctor can refer you to a consultant ophthalmologist, usually at an eye clinic. They will examine your eyes and talk to you about possible treatments. Early treatment may help to avoid permanent sight damage.

- Your doctor can tell you about Low Vision Services where staff can loan you a range of magnifiers and special glasses.
- Your ophthalmologist can tell you whether you qualify to be registered as Severely Sight Impaired (blind) or Sight Impaired (partially sighted).
- Your eye clinic may have a Sight Loss Advisor who can offer emotional support as well as advice about the help you can get from Hampshire County Council Sensory Services Teams and other organisations.

■ Hampshire County Council Sensory Services for Adults

We have specially trained staff who can give you information and advice.

These staff can arrange a meeting where you can talk about the effect of your sight loss on you, your family and your friends.

You will be able to find out about service and specialist equipment available to help you manage the tasks of day-to-day life.

A Sight Loss Advisor can offer you a one to one appointment to discuss the difficulties you have with everyday tasks and other ways in which your sight loss is affecting you. They can also offer you a place on a group information session that offers advice and practical demonstration of equipment.

A Rehabilitation Worker can help you overcome difficulties with tasks like getting around (both in and out of doors), kitchen skills and using the telephone. They may be able to offer advice on lighting and magnifiers and help you to build your confidence.

For more information, contact your local Sensory Services Team through Hantsdirect. Useful information can also be found on our website

www.hants.gov.uk/adult-services/disability/sight-loss.htm

■ Open Sight

Open Sight provides support and advice to help blind and partially sighted people to live as full and independent a life as possible.

For more information about Open Sight contact:

■ Open Sight

25 Church Road
Bishopstoke
Eastleigh, SO50 6BL

Telephone 023 8064 1244

Email info@opensight.org.uk

Website www.opensight.org.uk

Registration

If your sight loss is likely to be permanent, it may make it easier to get help, advice and some concessions if you register as blind/severely sight impaired or partially sighted/sight impaired.

Nine out of ten people registered as severely sight impaired still have some sight, so don't think you have to have no sight at all to be able to register.

Hampshire County Council maintains these registers, but the only person who can decide whether you qualify for registration is a consultant ophthalmologist at the hospital Eye Department.

If you want to be registered, and the ophthalmologist decides that you can, they will complete a form with you and ask you to sign it. They will send copies to you, your doctor and to Hampshire County Council. The Sensory Team will then either arrange an appointment or send the registration card to you.

Remember that registration is voluntary and you can ask to be removed from the register at any time.

What does registering entitle me to?

If you are registered you are entitled to:

- a Disabled Persons' Railcard – you can get details from your local train station
- some reduced travel costs – your local council can give you details of schemes operating in your area
- free NHS eye tests
- free use of Directory Enquiries – you can get details and an application form by calling 0800 587 0195
- equipment to help you at work – your local Job Centre can give you details of this.

How to contact Hampshire County Council Sensory Services Teams

In addition, if you are registered blind/severely sight impaired you are entitled to:

- **an extra tax allowance is available – contact 0845 366 7887**
- **additional benefits – contact your local Department of Work and Pensions or the Benefits Enquiry Line 0800 882200 for more information**
- **a 50% reduction on any TV licence bought in your name – remember, too, that if you are over 75, you can get a free TV licence anyway**
- **parking concessions – you can apply for a ‘blue badge’ which gives free street parking for any car you are travelling in. Contact the Blue Badge Unit, Mottisfont Court, The Castle, Winchester, SO23 8ZB Telephone 0845 603 5633 Email blue.badge@hants.gov.uk Website www.hants.gov.uk/bluebadge/treasurers-bluebadgecontactus.htm**

For general enquiries call Hantsdirect on 0845 603 5638

Local teams

- **Alton**
Park House, High Street, Alton, GU34 1EN
Email north.east.sensory@hants.gov.uk

- **Basingstoke Sensory Services Team**
Social Work Department,
Sun Alliance House, 37-41 Wote Street,
Basingstoke, RG23 7LU
Email north.east.sensory@hants.gov.uk

- **Gosport**
133 Stoke Road, Gosport, PO12 1SD
Email south.east.sensory.team@hants.gov.uk

Sensory Services Teams

- **Havant**
Town End House, PO Box 61,
East Street, Havant, PO9 1UB
Email south.east.sensory.team@hants.gov.uk

- **Hythe**
West Shore House, West Street, Hythe,
Southampton, SO45 6A
Email west.sensory@hants.gov.uk

- **Romsey**
Former Magistrates Court, Church Street,
Romsey, SO51 8AQ
Email west.sensory@hants.gov.uk

- **Winchester**
Capital House, 48-52 Andover Road,
Winchester, SO23 7SB
Email west.sensory@hants.gov.uk

Are there any other useful organisations?

There are many groups and voluntary organisations providing services for visually impaired people. These include dial-a-ride, talking newspapers and local groups such as Neighbourcare, which offer a wide range of help.

You can also speak to an employment advisor at your local Job Centre.

You can get details of organisations local to you from Open Sight, or from your local Council of Community Service.

Other useful phone numbers

Equipment

- **Cobolt Systems Ltd**
01493 700172

- **IC**
01226 762 528

- **Optima**
01803 864218

- **Partially Sighted Society**
01302 323132

- **Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)**
0303 123 9999

Other useful phone numbers

Support Organisations – General

- **Action for Blind People**
0800 915 4666

- **Benefit Enquiry Line**
0800 882200

- **Deafblind UK**
01733 358100

- **Guide Dogs for the Blind**
023 8076 8800

- **Open Sight**
023 8064 1244

- **National Federation of the Blind**
01924 291313

- **RNIB Helpline**
0303 123 9999

Other useful phone numbers

Support Organisations – Specialist

- **British Blind Sport**
01926 424247

- **British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society**
0845 123 2354

- **Diabetes UK**
(formerly British Diabetic Association)
0207 424 1000

- **International Glaucoma Association**
0207 737 3265

- **Macular Disease Society**
0845 241 2041

- **Nystagmus Network**
01636 627004

Other useful phone numbers

- **Sense**
020 7272 7774
for younger deafblind adults and children
-

- **Sense South East**
0845 127 0060

Taped information

- **Calibre Cassette Library**
01296 432339
-
- **RNIB Talking Books**
0303 123 9999
-
- **TNAUK**
01435 866102
national magazines on tape

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