

Information on the Services Provided by Local Social Services

The Social Services Department can provide and arrange advice and assistance for People who are blind or partially-sighted, and can offer help to maintain independence. This handout describes these services and also gives other useful information.

In each district there is a group of specialist social workers who will assess and assist you with any problems you may have. The address will be on the Certificate that the consultant signed.

Throughout the borough there are local social services offices where you can get help and advise about a wide range of difficulties. These are listed over the page.

Registration

The Social Services Department keeps a register of people who are blind or partially-sighted. Registration is only done on the recommendation of an ophthalmologist. You do not have to be registered but, if you are, you will receive a card saying so. This should be kept as evidence of registration.

Advice and Guidance

One of the Social Workers will be pleased to talk with you, if you wish, in your home or at the office, and offer you and your family advice and guidance about any problems connected with your sight, or any other difficulty you may be experiencing, whether it be practical or emotional, or within your family.

Rehabilitation

We have a Rehabilitation Officer in the borough who will encourage and teach people with a visual impairment in the skills needed to maintain independence in such matters as cooking household management and communication, as well as advice on mobility and safe travel.

Aids to Daily Living

There is a wide variety of equipment available about which your social worker or rehabilitation officer will advise you. Some can be obtained from the RIB -Royal National Institute for the Blind (see page 11), or the Partially-Sighted Society, but check what is obtainable via the Social Services Department.

This equipment includes watches and clocks, writing guides, kitchen aids, white sticks, etc.

Low-Vision Aids

Some hospitals supply free low-vision aids, or magnifiers, through their LVA Clinic. Alternatively, the Social Services department can arrange a low-vision assessment.

Asian Day Centre

This is at Townfield School Site, Coldharbour Lane, Hayes, Mx. UB3 3DD. Tel: 0181-569 2792

Library Service

Large print books are available from all libraries. There is also a housebound readers service. For details Tel: your local library.

Talking Books

There are books available on standard cassette tape which can be borrowed from your local library or from the Calibre Library). Postage is free if you are registered as blind or partially-sighted.

Books on giant cassette tape and the machines for playing them are obtainable from the RIB Talking Book Service Provided application is made via the Social Services Department, the rental of these machines is paid by them. This service includes books recorded in Hindi.

Talking Newspaper

The Talking Newspaper Association of the United Kingdom also records a number of Sunday newspapers and Monthly Magazines on standard cassette tape, at a cost of ,10.00 per annum subscription.

Using a Telephone

A large dial can be fitted to the older style telephone. A guide can be fitted to a push button telephone. You can also be supplied with a personal telephone directory using giant Dymo letters.

For further help call BT Action for Disabled Customers Tel: 0181 205 4853 or Freefone 0800 671504.

There is a Free Directory Enquiry service for people unable to read the phone books.

Social Clubs

There are social clubs for people with a visual impairment in most areas. Details can be obtained from the Social Services Department (see page 1). There are also support groups for people who have sight and hearing problems.

Access to Services

All Councils have a commitment to equal access to services for all citizens. For example, there is an interpreting service covering a wide range of languages.

Special Classes

Details of classes run by the Social Services and Adult Education Departments can be supplied by your social worker. There are currently special classes for people with a visual impairment in handicrafts and pottery. the teaching of Braille, Moon and Typing can be arranged.

Training & Development

There will be a specialist careers officer for school leavers with disabilities, based at the Civic Centre.

As well as Disablement Employment Advisers (D.E.A.) based at at your local employment agency.

Travel

Bus & Underground Passes

People over pensionable age should apply to the Civic Centre, for off-peak travel passes.

People who are registered as blind or partially-sighted and are under pensionable age are also entitled to travel passes, by application to the Social Services Department. These entitle the user to free travel on London Regional Transport at any time if registered as blind and at any time except before 9.00 a.m. on Mondays to Fridays if registered as partially-sighted.

British Rail Card

If you are registered as blind or partially-sighted, you can apply for a Disabled Persons' Rail Card. This allows a blind person and a friend to travel at reduced fare. Details from: British Rail, Department XX, P.O.Box 28, YO1 1FB.

Postage

Special equipment for visually impaired people can be despatched free, by using an "Articles for the Blind" label obtainable from the RIB.

Children

There is a wide range of help available for children who have sight difficulties, and their parents, from the Health Services, as well as the Social Services and Education Departments.

From this department, one of the social workers will be pleased to visit to offer

counselling with regard to the difficulties that can arise when a blind or partially-sighted child is a member of the family, as well as to advise on financial and other practical help available.

Holidays

Various voluntary organisations have specialist holiday facilities, e.g. RIB; Action for Blind People

Chip & PIN

As you may know, Card Issuers and Retailers have been busy telling customers that after the 14th February 2006 signatures will no longer be accepted when using Chip & PIN cards. This information is correct; customers with a Chip & PIN card will have to input a PIN rather than use a signature. This will not affect blind and partially sighted people who have been issued with a Chip & Signature card; signatures will be still be allowed.

Some visually impaired people who are unable to use PINs have a Chip & PIN card rather than a Chip & Signature card and have until now been asking Retailers to allow them to sign rather than key in a PIN. We would strongly advise anyone in this position to contact their Card Issuer to request a Chip & Signature card.

Unsurprisingly, messages about these changes are sometimes getting confused. Some customers have been told by Banks or Retailers that no signatures will be allowed at all. As mentioned, this is incorrect. Retailers and their staff who are confused about the use of Signatures with Chip & Signature cards should be reminded that when the card is inserted into the machine by the Till it will actually tell them to request a signature rather than a PIN number.

If all else fails, people can tell Retailers that if they don't accept Chip & Signature cards they are in breach of the DDA.

After 14th Feb we would like to hear from people who have had their Chip & Signature card refused by Retailers.

Hopefully this will solve most problems!

St. Dunstons

This organisation offers a wide range of welfare services to all ex-service personnel

who are registered as blind and whose sight loss is attributable to war service injury.
If you think you may be eligible contact: P.O. Box 58, 191 Old Marylebone Road,
London, NW1. Tel: 0171-723 5021.

Additional Services for People who are Registered as Blind Only

Radio Sets - These are available on free loan from the British Wireless for the Blind Fund. Apply to the P.D.T. Team (See page 1).

Television Licence - A reduction of 50% to those registered as blind, partially sighted have no reduction. This MAY BE OBTAINED AT A POST OFFICE UPON PRODUCTION OF A CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY SOCIAL SERVICES.

Finance - Check your benefit entitlements with the local Benefits Agency or Social Services Department.

When a person becomes registered as blind they can claim additional income tax relief.

Car Stickers - Registered Blind people are eligible for the Orange Badge parking scheme. Apply to PDT

Voting - Registered blind people eligible to vote by post. Contact the Electoral Registration Office, Civic Center.

Useful Address (Not already mentioned)

R.N.I.B. - (Royal National Institute for the Blind), 105 Judd street London, WC1H 69NE. TEL: 020 7388 1266. Their new Low Vision Assessment centre rung by Suzzan Badger, Merek Karas is one of the best in the country. They does accept private referrals and NHS referrals. Cost £150 + Aids

Talking Book Service for Blind People Mount Pleasant, Alperton, Wembley. Tel: 0181-903 6666 Really useful service.

Calibre Library (Standard Cassettes), Aylesbury, Bucks. HP22 5XQ. Tel: 01296 432339

Talking Newspaper Association of the United Kingdom 90 High Street, Heathfield, East Sussex. TN21 8JD.
Tel: 01435 866102.

Rowntree Trust, Family Fund P.O. Box 50, York. Tel: 01904 621115

Middlesex Association for the Blind

Northolt Road Clinic, 322 Northolt Road, South Harrow, Middlesex. HA2 8EQ.
Tel: 0181 423 5141

Action for Blind People 14-16 Verney Road, London, SE16. Tel: 0171-732 8771

Guide Dogs Association

Folly Court, Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire. RG11 4BT. Tel: 01734 791911

Banks, Building society, Utility Bills:

Most companies will supply your statements and bills in various sizes of large print and some companies even in Braille if you ask.

Partially-Sighted Society.

Queen's Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire. DN1 2NX. Tel: 01302 68998 head office

The Sight Centre, 9n Plato Place, 72-74 St Dionis Road, London. SW6 4TU Private Assessments £25

The Macular Disease Society - Excellent support group

PO Box 16 Denbigh LL16 5ZA Tel 0800 328 2849

Also a charity to support new research, as well as a very good news book that is regularly produced. They also have meetings where various talks and aids are on display. Well worth joining.

The Big print National Weekly newspaper 0925 242222

Herts society for the blind, Leahoe House, County Hall, Pegs lane, Herts, SG13 8DZ 01992-588145

VideoSpec Colour Pocket Magnifier Electronic easy to use Visual Aids 01483-722273 email Salies@videopec.co.UK

Telquick - Produce a range of Useful stationary in large print. 01892 784121 email jepco@upso.co.UK

Optima Low vision services - Range of Video magnifiers including Jordy the wearable video magnifier 01803 864218 email information@optimalowvision.co.UK

Olympia Portable Video Magnifier 080 8090 8090