

Vision Rehabilitation Charter

People who have lost some or all their sight, who are blind or partially sighted, might be in need of support from a rehabilitation specialist who can help them to regain lost skills and find new ways to live independently in challenging circumstances. This document provides information on understanding what service you should expect from your local authority's vision rehabilitation service. It tells you what the job of the **Vision Rehabilitation Specialist** (VRS) entails, what to expect of an assessment of your needs, what Certification and Registration mean, and how to complain if you are not satisfied.

The name Vision Rehabilitation Specialist is also known as Rehabilitation Officer for the Vision Impaired (ROVI). To be consistent within this document, when referring to the officer, we have use **Vision Rehabilitation Specialist**.

This booklet is available in accessible formats such as large print, braille, electronic, and audio. Ask Wales Vision Forum for copies on telephone **029 2047 3954** or email **support@walesvisionforum.org.uk**.

Vision Rehabilitation – what you need to know

Vision rehabilitation services adopt a preventative approach when supporting individuals with sight loss. Vision Rehabilitation Specialists work with people with sight loss, family members and anybody involved with your care. The aims are to promote independence and increase safety in your home environment and the communities you live in. People's needs vary, and in some cases, you may be directed to support from other agencies or organisations better suited to meet them. These might include Care and Repair, charities, low vision opticians, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists.

Vision rehabilitation is normally carried out under the supervision of your local authority and should be free of charge.

Knowing your rights

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide services that prevent, delay or reduce the need for care and support, including minimising the effects of impairments. For people with sight impairments, this means **vision rehabilitation**.

Vision rehabilitation is key to helping people with sight loss remain independent. The service can help you learn new ways to accomplish essential tasks, and be introduced to a range of equipment and techniques to stay confident and independent, and avoid injuries and falls.

Referral

To apply to receive vision rehabilitation from the local authority, a referral can be made:

- by you (by contacting the Single Point of Access or first point of contact);
- through your Certificate of Vision Impairment (Wales) sent directly to the Sensory Team;

- from your Low Vision Service Wales optician;
- other sources, such as your GP.

Initial assessment

First of all, the local authority will gather details about you including your name and address and whether or not you are a Disabled Person. At this point you would need to stress that you have a sight condition (blind or partially sighted). You will then start a “**What Matters**” conversation to determine your needs, and that they can either be:

- supported by the social care team (which includes the sensory loss team for people with vision and/or hearing impairment) or
- by you and your family.

You will be asked about whether you consent to be registered as Sight Impaired (SI) or Severely Sight Impaired (SSI), what your needs are and about the outcomes you would like to achieve. The need for any support will be judged during this conversation, so it is important that you tell them about anything that might pose a risk to you in the home and outside, such as trip hazards, preparing meals or crossing roads. Try to insist upon doing things for yourself – if the local authority judges that you have someone available that can do things for you, this may reduce the support you receive from them.

Preparing for your assessment

Remember it's **your** independence that is important. Although family and friends may help you, such as by getting shopping or cooking meals, you may wish to do these things yourself.

Vision rehabilitation can help you to achieve this. Be careful in your initial “What Matters” conversation not to give the impression that you have your needs covered in this informal way, such as by friends and family.

Think about the difficulties you experience in the home and when out shopping and so on. These might be problems such as getting around in your house, reading books and your post, using local public transport, using a digital device like a computer, tablet or smartphone, or cooking and preparing drinks and meals.

Think about the goals you would like to achieve, such as doing your own shopping or getting back into playing a sport you used to enjoy. Don't think that you cannot achieve these things: a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist is trained to help you find solutions.

After your initial “What Matters” assessment

Everyone should be offered useful information and signposting to helpful services, in a format that they will be able to read – this could be digital, large print, audio or Braille. If your needs and outcomes can all be met through this information, you may be considered not to be in need of vision rehabilitation or other support from the local authority. However, if your needs change or if your support system alters or fails to work for you, you can refer yourself back into the Sensory Team to ensure that you receive the correct support for your new circumstances.

The Sensory Team will decide how to meet any additional support needs, and prioritise you according to the needs identified in your Certificate of Vision Impairment (Wales), by other health professionals, and your initial “What Matters” assessment conversation.

Prioritising should be done by a qualified Vision Rehabilitation Specialist and be based on you and your circumstances:

Priority 1: If your needs are identified as immediate or urgent, you should be seen within 5 working days of your initial contact. This will be to conduct a vision impairment assessment (see below). You will be classed as immediate or urgent if:

- there is a high risk of serious injury or harm, either physical or emotional;
- you have experienced sudden sight loss;
- or your family or carer is unable to gain access to the home to provide essential care.

Priority 2: This is if you are:

- at risk of injury/harm undertaking activities of daily living and accessing the community;
- unable to maintain essential carer or parental role;
- or in emotional distress.

If you fall within this priority, you should receive a vision impairment assessment within 28 days.

Priority 3: You will fall under this priority if you:

- have a medium/low risk of harm;
- have a stable situation but input is needed to promote safety and independence, relieve isolation and improve communication; and/or
- need to relieve stress on carers.

A carer might be a family member or friend.

Remember that you can contact adult social care services again if you feel that you have waited too long or if your needs have changed or become more urgent.

Vision Impairment Assessment

If your initial “What Matters” assessment conversation results in a referral to a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist for support, they will then arrange to visit you in your home within their priority timeframe to carry out a Vision Impairment Assessment.

Having vision impairment or experiencing sight loss can impact on your confidence to continue to do things independently. It can make some day-to-day tasks difficult and can increase the risk to yourself and your home. Having an assessment completed by a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist and a programme of support will help you to manage the risks so that you can regain your independence.

The assessment, which normally takes place in our home, takes a holistic and person-centred approach and covers four domains:

- Low vision therapy training
- Communication
- Activities of daily living
- Orientation and Mobility

You can have a person with you during an assessment who can also speak on your behalf, if desired. This assessment should result in you being directed towards a range of services that address your eye health, emotional, physical, financial and social needs and those of your carer if appropriate. To this end, a support plan will be created with you to enable you to meet your needs and outcomes. You should receive this within 28 days. You can ask for this plan in your preferred format, such as digital, large print, audio or Braille.

Low vision therapy training

- Understanding and explaining how your vision has been affected.
- Measuring your functional vision.
- Teaching low vision strategies to read and to transfer to everyday tasks.
- Carrying out a lighting assessment to increase contrast.
- Instruction on how to use low vision aids such as magnifiers.
- Advice on how to increase contrast in your home.
- Advice and support to reduce glare within the home environment.

Communication

- Ensure you are able to use a telephone to receive and make calls.
- Teaching you strategies to access your correspondence and manage finances.
- Teach strategies to enable you to use smart devices to manage emails, go online and access digital information.

Activities of daily living

- Ensure you are able to manage and maintain a safe home environment.
- Ensure you are able to prepare drinks and prepare food safely.
- Ensure you are able to use appliances safely independently.
- Develop and teach you safe strategies to undertake kitchen tasks independently.
- Advise you and teach you strategies to manage medication.
- Ensure you can manage personal care tasks.

Orientation and Mobility

- Carry out a home safety assessment to address risks to enable you to move around their home safely.
- Provide small aids and adaptations.
- Work with carers and family members to develop safe human guiding strategies.
- Provide training to develop pre cane skills, including trailing, lower and upper body protection.
- Undertake mobility training and teaching long cane, guide cane training to enable straight line travel.
- To improve posture, gait and spatial awareness.
- To undertake risk assessment of routes in your community
- Develop strategies to enable you to cross roads using controlled and uncontrolled road crossings.
- To work with you to access buses and trains.

Any training or services identified in your assessment should start within 12 weeks. You may also be provided with equipment, aids or minor adaptations – some of which will be free of charge. For example, these might be under-counter lights to improve light levels in the kitchen, large button telephones, a device to help you safely make a hot drink, a mobility (white) cane.

When vision rehabilitation does not fully meet your needs or if needs are identified but not achievable, an Adult Social Care Assessment (Wales) is carried out. Your VRS will be able to provide advice if this is the case.

Find your vision rehabilitation service at [Perspectif](#).

Paying a compliment or making a complaint

If you have received an excellent service local authorities would really appreciate hearing from you. Or, if you are unhappy about a rehabilitation service you have received, or that you have been waiting too long to receive one, you can complain. Compliments and complaints procedures are different from place to place. Go to your local authority website to find out how to go about it. If you are having difficulty finding the appropriate contact, get in touch with Wales Council of the Blind on 029 2047 3954.

If your complaint isn't dealt with satisfactorily by the local authority, you can also go to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales or vision rehabilitation professional organisation, [The Rehabilitation Workers' Professional Network](#)

Additional information

The Certification and Registration process

Certification and Registration are not the same – the first is carried out by the NHS, and the second by local authorities. Also, while registration with your local authority is probably a useful thing to do in the long term, it is not a requirement for getting rehabilitation support or other services from your local authority. Both registration and certification are voluntary.

Certification – you can only be certified as Sight Impaired (SI) or Severely Sight Impaired (SSI) by either a Consultant Ophthalmologist, or an Optometrist registered to provide WGOS (Welsh General Ophthalmic Service) 3 low vision assessment services. If you consent, your Certificate of Vision Impairment (Wales) will be sent to your local authority, as well as your GP and to NHS Wales for their records.

Registration – Local Authorities are legally obliged to manage and maintain a **register** of people who have sensory loss in their area. The register is split into 2 categories, “Vision Impairment” and “Hearing Impairment”. For more information about Hearing Impairment registers, contact your local authority Sensory Team or similar.

To be registered on the “Vision Impairment” register you must have had a Certificate of Vision Impairment (Wales) completed on your behalf, with your consent for it to be shared with your local authority. A call should be carried out by the local authority Sensory Team – usually by a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist / Rehabilitation Officer for the Vision Impaired – within a few days of their receipt of the Certificate of Vision Impairment (Wales) to ask for your consent, in this instance, to be registered. You may, in some areas, be called by your local sight loss charity where they have a contract with the local authority to provide services.

Support through Direct Payments

If the local authority has decided that you are entitled to community care services, you can choose to receive payments in order to purchase the services yourself. This can give you much more flexibility and greater control of your support.

The assessment may identify additional needs that may be met by Direct Payments. For example, if you find it difficult or dangerous to travel to activities and events using public transport, you can use Direct Payments to pay for a driver. Your Vision Rehabilitation Specialist should explain Direct Payments to you, if you're eligible. Be sure to ask about them. More about them is given here at the [Wales Vision Forum site](#).

Support in your community

After your assessment, you may be signposted or referred to other services such as low vision optometrists / opticians, local and national charities or other services that you might benefit from. More about this is at the [Wales Vision Forum site](#).

Benefits and concessions

Registration status and/or a Certificate of Vision Impairment (Wales) can aid access to many benefits, including blue badges, bus passes, and can support people to access welfare benefits and tax concessions. You can find out more about these at the [Wales Vision Forum website](#).

Links

Social Care and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/social-services-and-well-being-wales-act-2014-the-essentials.pdf>

The **Wales Vision Forum**: <https://walesvisionforum.org.uk>

More about **Benefits and Concessions**:

<https://walesvisionforum.org.uk/benefits-and-concessions>

Perspectif is an online portal to many services:

<https://perspectif.org.uk>

To find your **vision rehabilitation service** go to

<https://perspectif.org.uk/service/search?type=23>

The **Rehabilitation Workers' Professional Network**

<https://www.rwpn.org.uk/Concerns-and-Complaints>

Direct Payments: <https://walesvisionforum.org.uk/direct-payments>

To find out more about **support in your health board area** visit: <https://walesvisionforum.org.uk/support-from-other-organisations> or contact **Wales Vision Forum**, who will direct you to the right contacts or arrange for the organisations to contact you.

- Call: **02920473954**
- Email: support@walesvisionforum.org.uk
- Web: <https://walesvisionforum.org.uk>

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