

Confident Living

Shopping

R N I B

See differently



The Sight Advice FAQs

These answer questions about living with sight loss, eye health or being newly diagnosed with a sight condition.

It is produced by RNIB in partnership with a number of other sight loss organisations.
sightadvicefaq.org.uk



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About this guide

Finding where to shop, choosing what to buy and paying for it can be challenging if you're losing or have lost your sight. In this guide, you can get some tips on how to adapt your shopping habits and read about the services which are available for people with sight loss.

Throughout this guide, we will mention an online listings directory called the Sightline Directory. This is a website run by RNIB which has details of shopping assistance schemes and local societies that can help you with shopping, both in store and online. You can access the Sightline Directory for free at **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**

If you have any questions about the topics covered in this guide or want to find out how to get online to do your shopping, please call our Helpline. We're ready to help in any way we can.

RNIB Helpline
0303 123 9999
helpline@rnib.org.uk



Shopping in stores

Getting to the shops

There are many different options available to help you with getting to the shops, including asking friends and family for assistance. As this may not always be possible, we have included details of services that might be available in your area.

Using public transport

Using public transport or just getting out and about independently can be daunting when you have sight loss. We have suggestions that can help you build the confidence to get out and about. You can order a copy of our Confident Living booklet on Travel from our Helpline, or download it from our website at **[rnib.org.uk/travel](https://www.rnib.org.uk/travel)**

If you're worried about using public transport, or are unable to use it, then there are other options available.

Dial-a-Ride

'Dial-a-Ride', 'Ring and Ride' and 'Dial-a-Journey' are examples of door-to-door transport services provided by local authorities to help people who have difficulty using public transport. To find out if there's a service in your area, contact your local social services.

Reduced taxi fares

Some local authorities fund reduced taxi fare schemes for people with sight loss. An example of this is the Taxicard scheme in London. To find out if there's a scheme in your area, contact your local council.

Freephone taxi services

Some shops, especially supermarkets, offer a phone point where you can make free calls to a local taxi company who will come directly to the supermarket exit to pick you up. Ask your local supermarket if this is available in their shop.



Local travel schemes

Contact your local council for details of travel schemes and concessions in your area, as you may be able to travel at a reduced price or even for free. The Sightline Directory also has details of community transport schemes.

Buddy schemes

Some local councils can provide assistance with shopping and getting out in the community, but you'll need to have an assessment to establish your needs. You may have to pay for the services, but the council will work with you to ensure this is within your personal income.

You can also contact local blind associations who may run buddy schemes where trained volunteers can help with travel and shopping tasks. Visit the Sightline Directory to find details of your local association. You can also contact our volunteering team on **0173 337 5450** or email **volunteering@rnib.org.uk**

Other local groups may also be able to help you, for example, Age UK groups, which sometimes have volunteers who help with shopping. You can telephone the Age UK Helpline on **0800 678 1602** to find your nearest group.

Know your rights

The Equality Act 2010 is a law that aims to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to use services. This means that service providers have to make reasonable adjustments to their services to ensure you can access them.

A service provider is not allowed to pass on the cost of making a reasonable adjustment, meaning that you should never be asked to pay extra for the adjustments you require. An example of a reasonable adjustment is your bank providing your statements in a format of your choice, such as braille. Reasonable adjustments should already have been considered by the service provider and can often be made easily and quickly; sometimes it's just a matter of asking for them.

If you've experienced poor customer service and reasonable adjustments have not been made when you've asked for them, there are several steps you can take. The first is to follow the provider's complaint process, which usually involves writing a letter. This is often a very effective way of challenging poor customer service. If you're not satisfied with the response you receive, you can take other steps, for example, independent mediation, where an independent third party helps both sides in the dispute to find an acceptable

agreement. As a last resort, you could take the service provider to court.

There's more information on how to write an effective complaint letter and further advice in our Equality Act toolkit. Visit [rnib.org.uk/equalityact](https://www.rnib.org.uk/equalityact) or order a free copy through our Helpline.

Shopping assistance

When shopping, it's important to make the most of any support that is available to you. Many supermarket staff, like in Morrisons or Tesco, are given disability training, so don't be afraid to ask for help.

Some stores also offer an assisted shopping service to help you around the store. They will also help pack bags and provide support when leaving the store. Ask your local supermarket if they offer the service, but keep in mind that you may need to pre-book, especially at busy periods.

"Going to the shops can be difficult when you have sight loss, but there are so many things out there to help you. I started asking for assistance in my local supermarket and now everyone knows who I am! They are always helpful."

Ali Safder

Having a clear idea of the layout of a shop is always a good place to start, and if you are a regular shopper you may benefit from using the same shops as often as possible.

Many people use magnifiers when shopping. If you want to find out if a magnifier would help, contact your local low vision service to arrange for an assessment of your vision before buying any. We also have a talking colour detector which detects up to 150 colours, including shade variations, when holding it up to an item of clothing. Please visit our online shop at shop.rnib.org.uk or call our Helpline to find out more.



Many stores, such as Tesco, have portable scanners to use whilst you're shopping. You can scan each of your items and then pay at a machine which reads the portable scanners at the end of your shop. As the machines are only used for reading portable scanners, the checkout process should be a lot quicker.

Contact your nearest store to see if they offer this service.

If you shop at John Lewis and your smartphone has a camera, you can use the John Lewis app to scan product barcodes in store to access further product details and reviews.

"I love the John Lewis app, it really enhances my shopping experience. They have a 'scan' icon which uses your smartphone camera. I can scan the barcode of what I'm looking at and hear all necessary information about the item. I can then check and choose sizes and even add it to my basket on the app!"
Madleen Mann

Paying for your shopping

Identifying notes and coins

It's not always easy to identify what cash you have, especially now, due to the introduction of polymer notes. However, these notes have been made accessible so that you can spend your money independently. Bank notes now indicate their value with the use of small clusters of four raised dots in the shape of a square:

- **£10 note** has four raised dots in a square pattern in the top left corner, occurring twice in a downward row
- **£20 note** has the same square of four raised dots in the top left corner, occurring three times in a downward row
- **£50 note** has the same square of four raised dots in the top left corner, occurring four times in a downward row
- **£5 note** is distinguishable by the absence of the tactile feature.

There are also apps that can be downloaded to your smartphone to identify banknotes, such as Cash Reader and Seeing AI. Cash Reader is available on both Android (downloadable from the Google Play store) and iPhone (downloadable from the Apple store) and Seeing AI is available on iPhone only and can be downloaded from the Apple store.

For more information on products and services to support with identifying money call our Helpline on 0303 123 9999.

Good to know

There are many smartphone apps which are designed to help blind and partially sighted people get out and about and be independent. You can order a copy of our **Confident Living** booklet on Technology from our Helpline, or download it from our website at rnib.org.uk/technology

Using credit and debit cards

Most credit and debit cards use a chip and PIN system where you enter your card into a slot and enter a four-digit number into a standard keypad. The numbers on the pad are arranged like a telephone dial, and there is usually a tactile mark or dot on the number 5 key to help with navigation on the pad. If using the keypad is a problem for you, you can request a chip and signature card from your bank.

All shops should accept this type of card as well but the member of staff you are dealing with may not be aware that they are obliged to do so. If they're unsure, you could ask them to double check with a colleague or manager.

There are signature guides on sale from our online shop that can help when using a chip and signature

card or signing other documents like contracts or terms and conditions. Visit our online shop or call our Helpline for details.

Another alternative is a contactless card, where you simply touch the card on the card reader in order to make payment for items up to £100. Many banks now send out contactless cards to make it easier to pay for items quickly. If you struggle to see the pad, this could be a more accessible option. Speak with your bank to order a contactless card if you don't already have one.

If you have an iPhone 6 or above, or an Apple Watch, you can also use it to pay for items up to £100 through Apple Pay. This works in the same way as a contactless bank card payment, since you have to link the device with your bank account. Contact your bank for information about using Apple Pay.

For more information about accessible payments and banking, please refer to the Banking Factsheet. To access this contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999.**

You can also make payments through Google Pay on Android devices, such as smartphones and watches. Although there isn't a limit to how much you can spend in store using Google pay, some merchants may apply the contactless limit of £45.

Google Pay allows you to make secure contactless purchases above £45 by just unlocking your phone.

Organising your food shopping

Depending on the level of your sight, you may find using a hand-held magnifier and clear self-adhesive labels while shopping helpful. Add the label to the items you're going to buy before placing them in your trolley so that you can identify them when you unpack them at home later.

Alternatively, you could also use a PenFriend labeller to label items in the shop or at home, by recording your voice onto the self-adhesive labels and attaching them to your item. If you place the PenFriend onto the label, it will scan and read back what you've recorded. If you are purchasing electrical goods, ask for assistance in store to label remote controls and plugs.

You may find it useful to have a process to follow for organising your food shopping at home.

If you buy particular food items regularly, you don't have to produce a new paper label each time. Here are a few ways to make your labels reusable:

- Labels on elastic – thread thin elastic or elastic bands through punched labels and use around the necks of bottles or on jars or other containers.
- Attach labels to jar lids – for example, when you finish one jar of jam and purchase your next jar, simply swap the lids over.
- Attach labels to cut out squares of plastic or card – which can be attached to bottles and boxes using BluTack.

To find out more about the PenFriend and other available labelling devices available, contact our Helpline.

“Food was tricky. I taught myself to file tins in alphabetical order and got some magnetic letters, but soon learnt more than one tinned item begins with the letter ‘B’ for example! Once I got a PenFriend, it was much easier to label tins. Now I use it all the time.”
Jenny Hodges



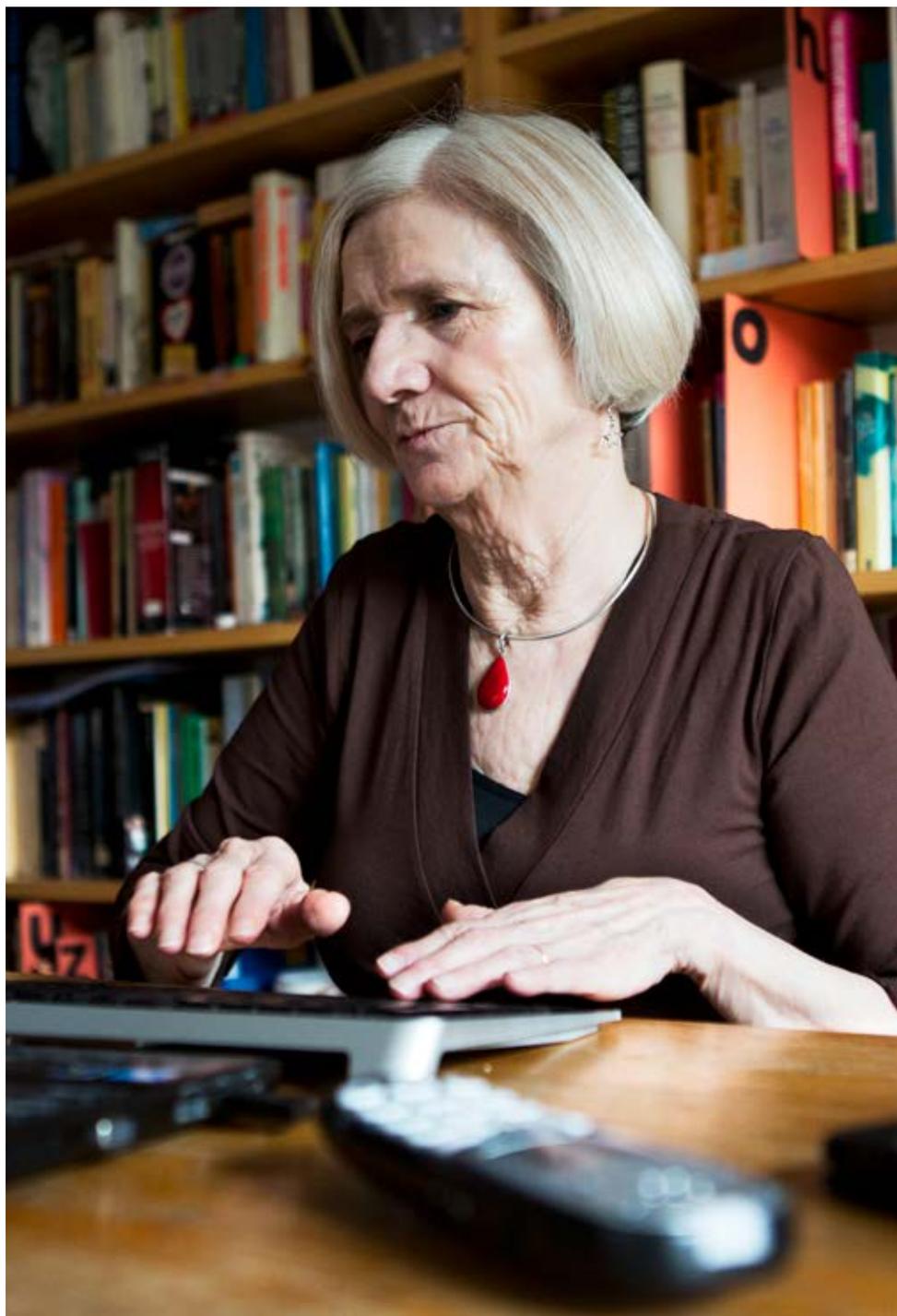
Online shopping

"I love online shopping. I took part in the first trials by Tesco of online grocery shopping in 1999 and have hardly visited a supermarket since. I can choose what I want, find new products and take advantage of special offers and promotions.

For other types of online shopping, I can choose from stores, products, read reviews and make an informed choice. If a particular site is inaccessible, then I'll try somewhere else. Just like shopping on the high street, I have many choices.

Online shopping is becoming easier thanks to smartphones. You can, for example, use your fingerprint for security and to access payment options. I am finding that shopping online is faster and easier using a smartphone."

Paul Porter



If you find going to the shops difficult, you could try online shopping as there are many advantages. Even if you're not a regular internet shopper and lack confidence with it, there are opportunities available to help you. We can help you get online through our Technology for Life team, or your local society might be able to give you advice.

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus, many people with sight loss have had trouble with shopping in store and have started online shopping. Many of them have learned the benefits of online shopping, especially when using shopping apps which can be downloaded onto smartphones and tablets.

"The app is very straightforward to use, it's one button. When you first go onto it, you book your slot, either delivery or Click & Collect, and once you've booked that, you can shop for all groceries. Every time I order shopping it goes into my favourites, so I'm not having to scroll through the whole supermarket."

Nina Chesworth

There are plenty of benefits to online shopping, such as:

- shopping at a time that suits you
- being able to shop around and find what you want at the best price
- having your shopping delivered to a place which is convenient
- checking product reviews by other customers before buying.

Most internet retailers have websites that are accessible to people with sight loss. Big retail websites such as Sainsbury's, Ocado, Amazon, Tesco and Morrisons ensure their websites meet international website accessibility standards, set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). These standards ensure that websites are suitable for magnification or screen reader software on computers, tablets and mobiles.

Online shopping removes the need to queue, to find products and the obstacle of having to carry shopping home as it is brought right to your door. It is also an independent way to purchase your goods as there is no need to rely on others.

"We don't have immediate family to help, so this was a little godsend, as we felt too nervous to do the shopping with social distancing. Blind people are very often 'pushed to the back', so it's wonderful RNIB did this. Perseverance pays!

Once recognised as a priority customer with Tesco, it was very easy. We had been trying for weeks, so after RNIB stepped in and put us on the vulnerable list, there were no problems.

The Tesco delivery service drop the shopping off outside the front door of our second floor flat, and the delivery times are convenient. I called Tesco when I made a mistake on the online shopping website and they sorted it out, providing me with another delivery slot later the same day.

I will definitely be recommending the service; we actually told a neighbour who has an eye condition about the priority supermarket slots. Tesco is the biggest supermarket in our area, so we're happy to get their support."

Douglas Witt

Assistive technology

There is a wide range of technology available to help when shopping on the internet, including modifications to your computer setup, specialist hardware and assistive software packages.

To get more information on technology that might be beneficial for you, call our Helpline.

Good to know

If you'd like to get help with using technology – from navigating with a smartphone, sending emails on the go and more – RNIB's Technology for life team can support you.

Paying for your shopping online

If you are a bit unsure about paying for goods and services on the internet, there are a few simple steps that can help your confidence.

- Make sure the website where you give your payment details is secure; the address should start with "https", where the "s" stands for secure.
- Look for a gold padlock symbol in the bottom right corner of the browser window, or the top left, depending on the browser you are using.
- If possible, use a credit card rather than a debit card as this can give you more protection.
- Always make sure that you check the delivery times and prices.
- Make a note of the order confirmation number or check that you have received a confirmation email.
- Always log out when you have finished your shopping, especially if you are on a public computer.

For extra security, many retailers now use Verified by Visa which asks you for different letters of a password every time you shop online. This password can be set up by either calling the bank or when you first purchase an item with your card online.

Speak to your bank for more information on how Verified by Visa works.

Protecting your computer

Whether you're regularly shopping online or hardly ever use it, it's good to ensure that your computer is secure.

Keep your operating system and browsers updated and use a good and up-to-date internet security programme. Some security companies, such as Avast, offer free versions that you can download from their website. Alternatively, there are free-trial versions that will tide you over for a month or so, and you can pay for a subscription. For further information on internet security, call our Helpline and we'll put you in touch with our Technology for life team, who will be able to assist you.

Using access technology

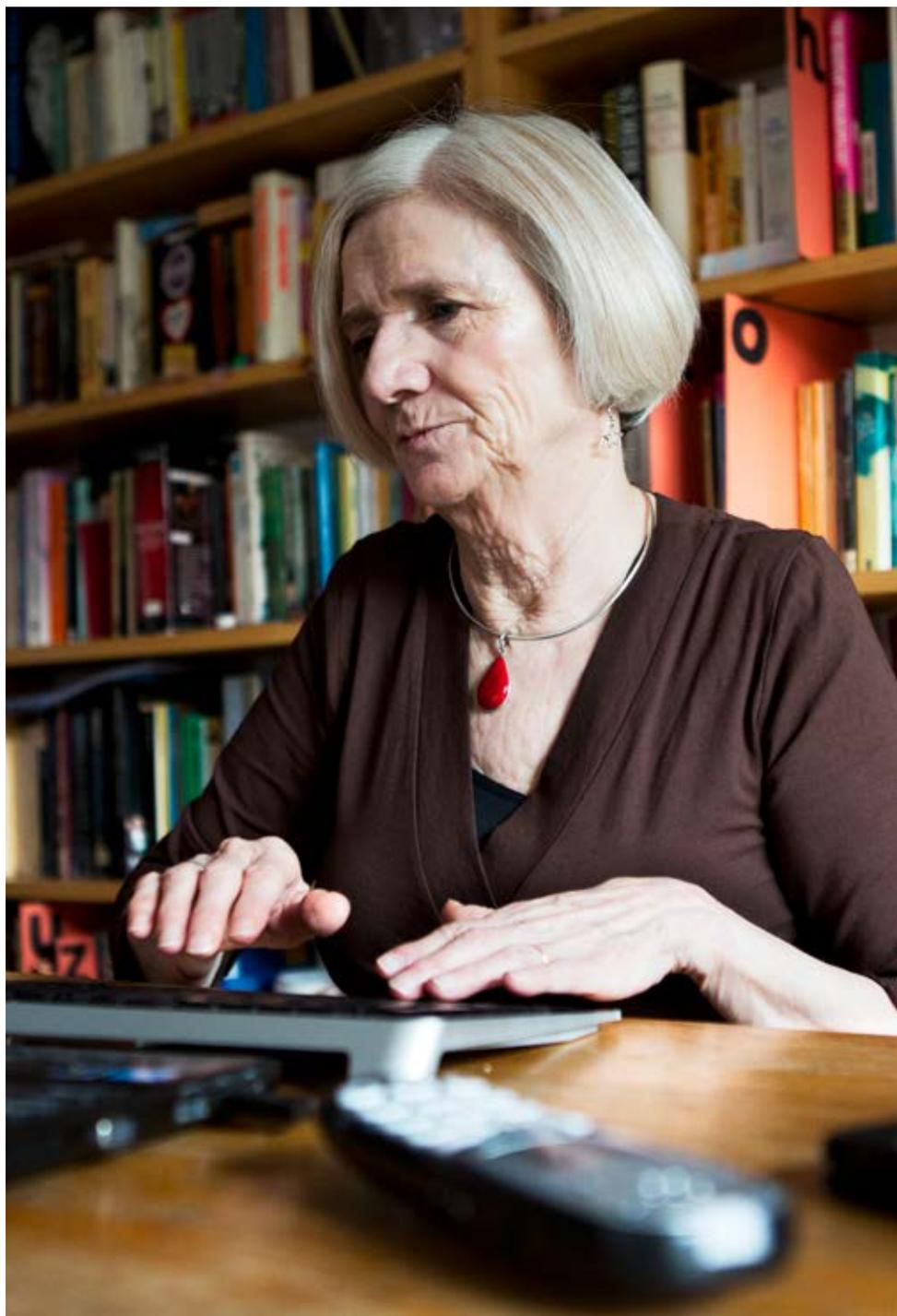
Access technology is a term used for equipment to help you see enough of the computer screen to be able to read it, so you can continue to use a computer effectively. There is a wide range of access technology available. To find out what is available to help you, contact our Helpline.

Your rights as an internet shopper

As an internet shopper, you have the right to:

- information about goods and services before you buy
- a cooling off period of 14 working days in which to cancel your order if you change your mind (different arrangements would exist for food ordered via the internet)
- protection of your credit card against fraud.

Many websites also allow somebody else to order shopping for you and have it delivered to your address, so a friend or family member could shop online on your behalf and have the items delivered to you.



Telephone and mail order shopping

Telephone shopping

Some shops may provide a telephone shopping service which allows you to purchase goods over the phone. The store should send you a catalogue, and if you need it in large print or audio CD, you can enquire if it is already available. Once you've made your shopping list, the store will often keep a record of it so that you can re-order the same things next time. You can have your shopping delivered to your home or place of your choice, but remember that they will usually add a delivery charge to your bill.

Mail order shopping

Mail order shopping is usually for larger more expensive items where the payment can be spread over a period of time and you can make sure you're happy with the goods before you pay for them. As with telephone shopping, you would normally need to register before you can use the service and choose your goods from a catalogue.

Further Information

RNIB Helpline

Our Helpline is your direct line to the information, support, advice and products, including referral to the Sight Loss Counselling Team and to ensure that you're receiving the right level of customer service or to find out how to challenge poor customer service, order our free guide.

Call **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**. We're here to answer your calls 8am-8pm weekdays and 9am-1pm on Saturdays.

RNIB Newsagent

We offer over 200 audio versions of publications such as Which?, the consumer magazine that has information and reviews about products, services and the latest deals. Visit **rnib.org.uk/newsagent** or call our Helpline.

Everyday Living Solutions

For the latest full range of our products, order a free copy of our Everyday Living Solutions catalogue. You can also subscribe, free of charge, to our Everyday Living Solutions email newsletter by emailing **shop@rnib.org.uk** or calling our Helpline.

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline

A government-funded service that offers consumer information and advice. Call **0800 144 8848** or visit **citizensadvice.org.uk**. A Welsh-speaking Consumer Direct service is also available on **0800 702 2020**. For the text relay service dial **18001** then **0800 144 8884**. For Scotland call **0808 164 6000** and for Consumerline Northern Ireland call **0300 123 6262**.

Sightline Directory

An online directory which will help you find services and support from national charities, local societies or befriending services. Visit **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**

Connect with others

Meet or connect with others who are blind or partially sighted online, by phone or in your community to share interests, experiences and support for each other. From book clubs and social groups to sport and volunteering, our friendly, helpful and knowledgeable team can link you up with opportunities to suit you. Visit **rnib.org.uk/connect** or call **0303 123 9999**.



RNIB Booklet Series

About the Starting Out Series

The Starting Out series aims to give people who are losing or have recently lost their sight essential information about living with sight loss. Titles include:

- Benefits, Concessions and Registration
- Emotional Support
- Help from Social Services
- Making the Most of Your Sight

About the Confident Living Series

The Confident Living series is for people who are losing or have recently lost their sight and are trying to build their confidence to continue to lead full and independent lives. Titles include:

- Reading
- Shopping
- Technology
- Travel

About the Understanding Series

The Understanding series is designed to help you, your friends and family understand a little bit more about your eye condition. Titles include:

- Age Related Macular Degeneration
- Cataracts
- Charles Bonnet Syndrome
- Dry Eye
- Eye Conditions Related to Diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Nystagmus
- Retinal Detachment
- Inherited Retinal Dystrophies including Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Posterior Vitreous Detachment

All these booklets are available in audio, print and braille formats. To order please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (all calls charged at local rate), email helpline@rnib.org.uk or visit shop.rnib.org.uk.

For a full list of the information sources used in any of these titles please contact ckit@rnib.org.uk.

To provide feedback on the Starting Out and Confident Living Series, please email ckit@rnib.org.uk.

To provide feedback on the Understanding Series, please email eyehealth@rnib.org.uk.

RNIB Helpline



Call: **0303 123 9999**



Email: **helpline@rnib.org.uk**



Or say, **“Alexa, call RNIB Helpline”**
to an Alexa enabled device.



Sight Advice FAQ: **sightadvicefaq.org.uk**

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