

# Sight loss - Equipment

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This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape, disc and can be translated into different languages.

**Information sheet F4**

**March 2015**

This information sheet is about:

- Special equipment for people with sight loss
- Where to get equipment
- Magnifiers and lighting
- How to find out more about high technology equipment and specialist computer software

## **Special equipment for people with sight loss**

There is a wide range of equipment to help you with everyday activities in your own home; things like:

- Cooking and food preparation
- Pouring drinks
- Dealing with tablets and medication
- Labelling and identifying tins
- Sorting out money
- Using the phone
- Using computers
- Lighting
- Hand-writing
- Telling the time
- Identifying colours
- Mobility and getting around
- Braille

## **Where to get equipment**

### **RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind)**

RNIB is the largest national provider of equipment for people with sight loss. You can order equipment directly from them and catalogues are available.

RNIB  
PO Box 173  
Peterborough  
PE2 6WS

Phone: 0303 123 9999  
Email: [shop@rnib.org.uk](mailto:shop@rnib.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

### **Somerset Sight**

This local organisation supports visually-impaired people, and has a resource centre where you can try out equipment before you buy it.

### **Somerset Sight**

Northfield House  
51 Staplegrove Road  
Taunton  
TA1 1DG

Phone: 01823 333818  
Email: [administration@somersetsight.org.uk](mailto:administration@somersetsight.org.uk) (email hyperlink)  
Website: [www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk) (hyperlink)

### **Adult Social Care**

Some equipment is available through Adult Social Care, following an assessment by a specialist social care worker in the Sensory Loss team. The equipment is available on loan and should be returned when no longer required.

Phone: 0300 123 2224

Email: [adults@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:adults@somerset.gov.uk) (hyperlink)

## **Magnifiers and lighting**

Most visually-impaired people retain some vision, though different eye conditions can have different effects. There are several types of magnifiers and lighting that can help you make the most of your remaining sight.

### **Magnifiers**

Magnifiers come in all shapes and sizes and can help with:

- Reading post, instructions, and labels
- Your hobbies
- Kitchen tasks, such as peeling vegetables, and seeing the controls on your cooker, microwave and washing machine

Magnifiers are available free of charge, through Low Vision Clinics. These are held monthly throughout Somerset. This service is provided by Optima Low Vision Services for the NHS.

You can arrange appointments through your eye consultant, GP or social worker. For more information about the service, and clinics in your area, contact:

### **Optima Low Vision Services**

Phone: 01803 864218

Website: [www.optimalowvisionservices.co.uk](http://www.optimalowvisionservices.co.uk) (hyperlink)

### **Somerset Direct**

Phone: 0300 123 2224

Email: [adults@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:adults@somerset.gov.uk) (hyperlink)

You can also buy low vision aids and magnifiers privately through Somerset Sight, a local voluntary organisation that supports people with sight loss.

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51 Staplegrove Road  
Taunton  
TA1 1DG

Phone: 01823 333818

Email: [administration@somersetsight.org.uk](mailto:administration@somersetsight.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

Website: [www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk) (hyperlink)

Many opticians and optometrists also sell magnifiers and low vision aids. Contact your local optician for more information.

### **Lighting**

Good lighting can make a big difference to your vision. Although some people with sight loss do not like glare, many people benefit from brighter lighting in their homes.

It is important to have good central lighting in your rooms, with bright bulbs, shaded by pale lampshades. Additional lighting on the stairs and over kitchen worktops can also help.

As well as good central lighting, most people need “task lighting”, for reading and other close work. Some of the most effective task lamps have fluorescent bulbs, which give a clear white light without glare.

### **RNIB**

This national voluntary organisation has information about all types of lighting, and also sells different types of lamps.

RNIB Helpline: 0303 123 9999

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) (hyperlink)

## **Thomas Pocklington Trust**

This organisation has done a lot of research into lighting for people with a visual impairment, and has some useful information and guidance.

## **Thomas Pocklington Trust Ltd.**

Pier House  
90 Strand on the Green  
London  
W4 3NN

Phone: 020 8995 0880

Email: [info@pocklington-trust.org.uk](mailto:info@pocklington-trust.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

Website: [www.pocklington-trust.org.uk](http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk) (hyperlink)

## **Somerset Sight**

This local voluntary society has a resource centre which sells different types of lamps, suitable for people with a visual impairment.

## **How to find out more about high technology equipment and specialist computer software**

This equipment is increasingly being used by visually-impaired people in their homes. There are specially designed video magnifiers that magnify print to a large size on a screen. They enable people to read books, newspapers, labels and instructions. There are also machines that read printed material out loud.

This type of equipment is very expensive and it is important to have advice about what is best suited to your needs. You can try out much of the equipment for 14 days to make sure it's right for you before you buy it. If you are on a low income it may be possible to get financial help from charities.

You can try out some high technology equipment at the local resource centre run by Somerset Sight.

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51 Staplegrove Road  
Taunton  
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Website: [www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk) (hyperlink)

### **Independent Vision (Mere) Ltd**

This local company rents and sells some items of high technology equipment to people with sight loss. They can visit you at home to demonstrate the equipment, and leave it with you for a trial period. If it is suitable, you can choose to buy or rent it.

### **Independent Vision (Mere) Ltd.**

North Street  
Mere  
Wiltshire  
BA12 6HH

Phone: 01883 338117

Website: [www.independentvision.org.uk](http://www.independentvision.org.uk) (hyperlink)

### **Action for Blind People**

Action for Blind People provides advice about high technology equipment.

### **Action for Blind People**

10 Still House Lane  
Bedminster, Bristol, BS3 4EB

Phone: 0117 953 7750

Email: [bristol@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:bristol@actionforblindpeople.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) (hyperlink)

### **Specialist computer software**

There is a large range of specialist software to enable people to use email, type letters and use the Internet. The specialist software can enlarge print on the screen, or transcribe it into audio or Braille formats.

Somerset Sight has a resource centre where you can try some of the software. You can also get information from your social worker, if you have one.

You can get more information about computer technology for visually-impaired people from RNIB. They also have a “Technology Squad” of volunteers who can provide you with advice in your own home.

### **RNIB Technology Department**

Phone: 0845 900 0015

Email: [ict@rnib.org.uk](mailto:ict@rnib.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) (hyperlink)

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Website: [www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk) (hyperlink)

### **Action for Blind People**

Action for Blind People also runs a technology support service. They can advise about products, and visit you in your home to provide short training sessions.

Phone: 01392 458060

Email: [Exeter@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:Exeter@actionforblindpeople.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

### **Ability Net**

This organisation provides IT support for people with disabilities.

Phone: 0800 269545 or 01926 312847

Email: [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

Website: [www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk) (hyperlink)

There is a smaller support service called Abilitynet ITCH (IT Can Help) which provides a network of volunteers who visit people in their own homes, to provide advice and help with using computers.

Contact Abilitynet as above, or at [www.itcanhelp.org.uk](http://www.itcanhelp.org.uk) (hyperlink)

### **RNIB Technology Services and Technology Squad**

RNIB has a technology support service, and a range of leaflets and beginners' guides to computers, accessible software and mobile phones.

They also have a network of volunteers, known as the Technology Squad, who can visit people at home to advise on computers and technology.

Phone: 0303 123 9999

Email: [technologysquad@rnib.org.uk](mailto:technologysquad@rnib.org.uk) (email hyperlink)

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) (hyperlink)



## **UCanDoIT**

This organisation teaches people with sight and hearing loss how to use computers.

Phone: 020 7730 7766

Website: [www.ucandoit.org.uk](http://www.ucandoit.org.uk) (hyperlink)

## **Your opportunity to feedback**

We welcome your comments about the services you receive. If you would like to tell us what you think, please either:

- Contact us on our website, [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk) (hyperlink) or
- Speak to your social care worker.
- Phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224, or
- Contact the Adults and Health Customer Experience Officer:  
Floor B2 East  
County Hall  
Taunton  
TA1 4DY  
Email: [customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk) (email hyperlink)

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