

Sight loss – leisure, holidays and travel

WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK



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

Information sheet F7

March 2015

This information sheet is about:

- How to get advice about hobbies and leisure activities
- Special activities for visually-impaired people
- Television and audio description services for television
- Help at cinemas for visually-impaired people
- Travel concessions for visually-impaired people

How to get advice on hobbies and leisure activities

Losing your sight can have a big impact on your hobbies and leisure interests.

Some people carry on with their existing hobbies by adapting techniques using magnifiers, lighting, and other special equipment. Other people decide to take up new activities which are less dependent on sight, such as pottery.

However, there are many leisure activities and hobbies that people with sight loss can take part in, including art, creative-writing, gardening, knitting, woodwork, craft and sport. RNIB can give you more information.

RNIB Helpline:

Phone: 0303 123 9999

Fax: 01733 375001

Local activities

There are many local activities. Some are mainstream activities, open to everyone, and some are specifically for visually-impaired people.

Somerset Skills and Learning

Somerset Skills and Learning run a range of courses, which are open to everyone. If you need special assistance to help you take part, it can be arranged for you.

Phone: 0845 6880488

Email: generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

Website: www.learnsomerset.co.uk (hyperlink)

Special activities for visually-impaired people

Somerset Sight

This organisation provides a range of activities, including social clubs, craft groups and bowling for visually-impaired people.

Phone: 01823 333818

Email: admin@somersetsight.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Television, and audio description services for television

One of the most effective ways to see television more clearly is to sit close to the screen. Contrary to myths, this will not damage your eyes.

There are also low vision aids to help you see the television.

Audio description of television programmes is becoming more widely available. Audio description gives a verbal commentary in the breaks between the characters speaking, describing scenery, facial expressions, costumes and actions.

You can receive Audio Description if you have a digital television through a set top box, (but only some makes and models) or from Sky or Cable television.

The RNIB also has a home video and DVD service which has a large selection of audio described videos and DVDs to rent or buy.

Phone: 0303 123 9999

Fax: 01733 375001

Help at cinemas for visually-impaired people

Audio description is available at some cinemas, through headsets. Contact your local cinema for more details. Many cinemas also offer concessions to people who are registered severely sight-impaired/blind, or sight-impaired/partially sighted, or who receive Disability Living Allowance and you may be able to have a concession for a companion. Ask at your local cinema.

Holidays for visually-impaired people

Action for Blind People Holidays

Action for Blind People organise the following holiday services:

- Specially adapted hotels in Weston-super-Mare and other resorts throughout the country, exclusively for the use of visually-impaired people and their friends. Prices do not include transport.
- Mainstream package holidays to the Channel Islands of Guernsey and Jersey. Prices include all transport costs. The hotels are not specially adapted.
- Coach to Coast holidays for local societies and organisations for visually-impaired people. These are group holidays in the UK.
- UK coach touring holidays.

Action for Blind People

Phone: 0800 915466

Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk (hyperlink)

Tourism for All

This organisation provides information about holidays and travel for people with a visual impairment.

Phone: 0845 124 9971

Travel concessions

Rail concessions for visually-impaired people

The Disabled Persons' Railcard gives some reduction in the cost of fares for people registered severely sight-impaired/blind and sight-impaired/partially-sighted.

Disabled Persons' Railcard Office

PO Box 6613

Arbroath

DD11 9AN

Phone: 0345 605 0525

You can download an application form from:

www.disabledperson-railcard.co.uk (hyperlink)

People who travel by rail may occasionally still be eligible for reduced fares. Contact your local railway station for more details. You will need proof of your registration. For more about registration, please see our information sheet **F1 Sight loss – General information**.

It can sometimes be possible for a guide or companion to get reduced fares if they are travelling with you.

The National Rail Enquiry Line can provide timetable information:

Phone: 0845 748 4950

Help on your rail journey

National Rail can provide you with assistance during the journey. You will need to book this 24 hours in advance of travelling. For more information about additional services, ask at your local station or contact National Rail Enquiries.

Phone: 0845 748 4950

Website: www.nationalrail.co.uk (hyperlink)

Bus concessions

The local authorities in Somerset work together to provide the Somerset Concessionary Travel Scheme.

The Somerset Travelpass allows free travel on all local buses and some express services in Somerset.

You are eligible for a Somerset Travelpass if:

- You are a Somerset resident and are of pension age
- You are under pension age but are registered blind/severely sight-impaired or partially-sighted/sight-impaired
- You are unable to drive on medical grounds

If you are only able to use public transport with the help of a carer, you may be eligible for a Companion Travelpass, which entitles your escort to free travel.

The pass is valid between 9am and 11pm on weekdays and all day at weekends and on public holidays.

Transporting Somerset

Somerset County Council

County Hall

Taunton

TA1 4DY

Phone: 0300 123 2224

Email: transport@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

Help for visually-impaired people at airports

When you book a flight, always tell your airline, travel agent or tour operator that you have a sight problem and require assistance. You should request this at least 48 hours before you fly. You can arrange for someone to assist you at check-in, through baggage check and security, and escort you to the plane.

On board the plane, you should advise cabin staff that you have a visual impairment.

If you have a guide dog, it can only travel under the Pet Passport Scheme. For more information contact the Guide Dogs – Pet Travel Scheme:

Helpline: 0370 241 1710

Email: pets.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk (hyperlink)

Help for visually-impaired travelling by sea

Before booking your journey, check with the ferry company, cruise operator or travel agent that they will be able to assist you with any requirements you have.

RNIB Travel Pack

The RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind) has produced a travel information pack which gives lots of advice on using public transport.

Phone: 0303 123 9999

Email: Helpline@rnib.org.uk (email 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 (hyperlink), or
- Speak to your social care worker.
- Phone Somerset Direct on 0303 123 2224, or
- Contact the Adults and Health Customer Experience Officer:
Floor B2 East
County Hall
Taunton
TA1 4DY
Email: customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

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