

**Information for
visually impaired people Ref. 101**



Registering as Blind or Partially Sighted



www.devon.gov.uk/socialcare

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General Information

What is registration?

People with a high degree of sight loss are eligible to be officially registered as **blind** or **partially sighted**.

We usually use the term 'visually impaired' to describe people with loss of sight, but the Register still uses the official terms, so we have used these in some parts of this leaflet.

Being registered as blind does **NOT** necessarily mean that you have total loss of vision, or that you will lose your sight completely. Many people who are registered as blind have some useful vision.

Registration is voluntary, but entitles you to certain benefits. Devon County Council Adult & Community Services can register you, but first you must be assessed by a consultant ophthalmologist at the eye department of the hospital you attend.

How can I become registered?

The ophthalmologist will decide if you can be registered as blind or partially sighted.

You will be asked to sign a Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) form asking for your permission to send the form to Adult & Community Services, together with a copy to your doctor and an anonymous copy to the Office for National Statistics.

Adult & Community Services will register you once they have received a copy of your form *and* a Rehabilitation Officer has visited you to explain what registration is about.

If you have signed a CVI form but the Rehabilitation Officer has not visited as quickly as you expected, you may wish to contact the Sensory Team to confirm that they have received your CVI form.

Once registered, you will receive a card as proof of your registration and this can be used to help gain entitlement to certain benefits or services.

Rehabilitation Officer visit

As well as explaining about registration, the visit is also a chance to talk about ways of helping you to cope with:

- ◆ everyday tasks like cooking and making hot drinks**
- ◆ benefits and services linked to registration**
- ◆ using your remaining sight to best effect**
- ◆ moving around indoors and out with more confidence and safety**
- ◆ how you feel about your visual impairment**
- ◆ learning new skills like touch-typing or Braille, if needed.**

What about special equipment?

You can get special equipment to help you overcome some of the problems that reduced or loss of sight brings.

The Rehabilitation Officer can demonstrate and offer advice on specialist equipment, such as large button telephones, for example.

Adult & Community Services cannot supply all equipment, so you may have to buy some yourself. Your Rehabilitation Officer may be able to help you get a grant from a voluntary association or charity.

If you buy aids or apparatus designed specifically for visually impaired people direct from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), the Partially Sighted Society or other specialist suppliers, you can get a big discount or not have to pay VAT.

What happens if I lose my registration card or move to another area?

If you lose your card, you can get a duplicate from your local Adult & Community Services office.

Your registration can also be transferred to another area if you move out of the area. Simply tell Adult & Community Services before you move.

If the new authority has Rehabilitation Officers we can let them know you are moving into their area and may need help in the future.

If you have already moved, you can notify the new Adult & Community Services (or Social Services) department of the local authority for the area you have moved to.

Financial benefits and concessions

Registration may mean that you are entitled to extra benefits and concessions, but the type of registration you have can affect the type of extra help that is available.

Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

The payment of social security benefits is complex and there are frequent changes. There are three simple rules to remember:

- ◆ The social security system always places the onus on *you* to find out what you are entitled to, so always seek specialist advice (see the Useful Contacts Section on page 10).
- ◆ Always inform the office paying your benefit of any change in circumstances. This is especially important if you have been registered as blind.
- ◆ Always keep copies of letters and notes of telephone calls, including times and dates.

The following is a brief description of the disability related benefits that you may be able to claim. See the **Seeing Sense** booklet for Torbay or Devon Adult & Community Services for more details.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

DLA is a benefit payable to a child or adult whose disability creates personal care needs and/or mobility difficulties. You must make the first claim before you reach 65. It is a benefit to help with the extra care and mobility costs of disability.

Attendance Allowance

You may be able to get Attendance Allowance if you are over 65 and do not receive Disability Living Allowance. A benefit to assist with the extra personal care costs of disability.

Employment and Support Allowance, and Income Support

Ring the Benefits Enquiry Line 0800 882200.

◆ Employment and Support Allowance

This is the standard contributory income replacement benefit for employed and self-employed people of working age. You must meet various conditions for payment.

◆ Income Support

This is an allowance to top up your existing

income to a minimum level. Income Support is made up of allowances and premiums according to your personal circumstances. Payment is affected by the income and capital of yourself and your partner of the opposite sex. Mortgage interest payments may also be included.

Carers Allowance

Carers Allowance is paid to someone providing at least 35 hours of care per week to a child or adult who receives a qualifying benefit.

Disabled Persons Tax Credits

You can get your earnings topped up if you are working at least 16 hours a week and meet the pre-qualifying conditions.

For more information please call 0845 605 5858.

Exemption from Non-Dependent Deductions

If people are living with you and you are receiving a means-tested benefit, such as Income Support or Housing Benefit, the amount you get may be reduced because of what they are expected to contribute. The regulations exempt you from this if you are registered as blind.

NHS Benefits

You can get free NHS sight tests if you are registered as blind or partially sighted. You may also be able to get free or reduced cost prescriptions if you are receiving a means-tested benefit.

Information is available in **NHS leaflets HC11** and **HC13** available from surgeries, post offices, clinics and hospitals.

Income Tax

If you are registered as blind (but not partially sighted) you will be able to claim a Blind Person's Allowance. A married couple can transfer any surplus allowance from one to the other.

Find out more from the Inland Revenue 0845 366 7887.

TV licenses

A 50% concession applies if you are registered as blind (but not partially sighted) and are the licence holder. Anyone over 75 is entitled to a completely free licence.

To find out more, please ring TV Licensing Enquiries on 0845 603 6999.

VAT

Some items of equipment or adaptations may attract VAT concessions.

For enquiries please contact the Customs & Excise Helpline 0845 010 9000.

Travel and Public Transport

Blue Badge Parking Scheme

You are entitled to a blue parking badge if you are registered as blind. Badges are issued to people, not cars, so any vehicle in which you are a passenger can display the badge.

Apply to MyDevon Tel. 0845 1551 007.

National Bus Pass Scheme

Free bus travel across England for eligible Devon residents. You can get a national bus pass for use on most bus services if you are registered blind or partially sighted, or over 60.

Time restrictions may apply on weekday mornings.

Concessionary Bus Travel Transport Co-ordination Service Tel. 01392 / 01271 383688.

Traveline, public transport info Tel. 0871 200 22 33

Rail Travel

Valid for 12 months, the **Disabled Persons Railcard** scheme covers the UK and is available to people who are registered blind or partially sighted. It permits a discount on first class and standard class tickets for you and one other adult travelling with you. Children aged from five and under 16 may also be eligible for a Disabled Persons Railcard. The helpline is Tel. 0845 605 0525, Textphone: 0845 601 0132.

All rail companies have dedicated travel assistance telephone numbers for people with disabilities. Details are listed in the Disabled Persons Railcard booklet (which contains an application form for the card). This is available at local rail stations.

**Completed application forms must be sent to:
DPR Office, PO Box 163, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE12 8WX.**

National Express Coaches

National Express does not offer a concessionary card linked to disability.

However, if you are aged 50 or over, you can get an Advantage 50 Coachcard. This is available for periods of one or three years, and provides one-third off ticket prices.

**Find out more from local travel agencies,
Stagecoach Devon - Traveline Tel. 0871 200 22 33,
or contact National Express Tel. 0870 580 8080.**

Audio Books

You can borrow audio books free from Devon and Torbay Library Services

Directory Enquiries

You can have the BT Telephone Directory Enquiries service free – call 0800 5870195 to register.

Useful Contacts

MyDevon Customer Service Centre for
information, advice and services in Devon
.0845 1551 007

Devon Sensory Team 01392 386630

Torbay Sensory Team 01803 208590

Local Voluntary Associations

Devon County Association
for the Blind 01392 876666

Exeter Society for the Blind 01392 270586

National Voluntary Associations

Royal National Institute
for the Blind (RNIB) 0845 7023153

Guide Dogs
for the Blind Association 01392 272967

Action for Blind People 0207 6354800
and the Exeter base01392 332818

More information is available in *Seeing Sense* (ref. 93)
from Devon Sensory Team, Tel. 01392 386630.

Notes:

Information for visually impaired people



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**For a version of this leaflet in
another format or language,
please ring 0845 1551 005.**

**Further copies can be obtained from Devon's
Sensory Team Tel. 01392 386630.**

**Comments on this leaflet: Please ring
0845 1551 005 or email: sensory@devon.gov.uk**

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