



Children and Young People's Services

Who is Who – Professionals Supporting your Family

If your child/young person has sight problems, you will meet many professionals associated with their individual needs. Medical and health professionals are there to provide support within the hospital environment. There are other professionals you will be introduced to you who work in the community, and there will be others you meet who supports your child/young person with early education matters. This is a basic guide to those people you may meet along your journey.

Medical

The Paediatric Ophthalmologist – the eye doctor who specialises in the treatment and diagnosis of children/young people's eye conditions. Paediatric Ophthalmologists may treat eye conditions with both medicines and by surgery.

The Ophthalmologist – specialises in eye conditions, in both adults and children/young people and helps with diagnosis and treatment. Ophthalmologists may treat eye conditions both with medicines and by surgery.

The Orthoptist – assesses the development of vision and treatment of eye movement disorders in children/young people, most commonly squints. The Orthoptist sees children/young people, normally within the eye department in a hospital, following diagnosis by the Ophthalmologist and appointments are usually on a regular basis. The Orthoptist may treat squint patients with spectacles and patching.

The Optometrist – is trained to detect abnormal eye conditions and defects of eyesight. Optometrists report to the General Practitioner and to the Eye Specialist when they detect an abnormal ocular condition. Optometrists prescribe spectacles to treat eyesight defects.



The Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) – is based in some eye hospitals and eye clinics. ECLOs may be employed by voluntary organisations or the NHS. The role of the ECLO was created because eye care professionals and organisations believed people needed support and information at the time of diagnosis of a serious eye problem, to enable understanding of the implications of the diagnosis and to support and assist individuals to understand the eye condition.

Following consultation, the ECLO is able to provide information about the eye condition, registration, benefit(s) information and where to find help. The ECLO can explain about difficulties your child/young person may experience and provide emotional support for parents during the early stages of your child/young person's diagnosis. The ECLO works closely with nursing and medical practitioners and can also help to liaise between the individual, the hospital eye department and the local social services sensory support teams, and provide information about local services and support groups. They are not based in all hospitals. Some of the larger hospitals may have a Family Support Officer or a Specialist Clinical Liaison Officer.

The GP - Family Doctor – your family doctor (also known as GP or General Practitioner) is concerned with general health of your child and can advise and arrange further examinations.

The Paediatrician – a doctor who specialises in working with babies and children/young people. They are often the first point of contact for families who find out their child/young person has a sight problem. Paediatricians sometimes work in hospitals and sometimes for community health services. It's usually a Paediatrician who refers your child/young person on to any other specialists that they need to see.

The Optician – is someone who dispenses spectacles to correct errors of the focusing system of the eye following assessment of the level of sight. These people usually have high street practices or an outlet within a larger shop, for example larger Boot's Chemist branches.

Health

The Occupational Therapist – is aware of the unique educational needs of the visually impaired child/young person with vision impairment, particularly with regard to sensory and motor skills. The Occupational Therapist assesses the sensory, perceptual, social and emotional wellbeing of the child/young person and through activities and play helps to maximize the child/young person's abilities, leading to



greater self-esteem and independence. Occupational Therapists can provide advice on equipment and adaptations to your home to promote independent living.

The Physiotherapist – can suggest routines to help development with regard to crawling, walking, posture and the encouragement for visually impaired children/young people to move confidently. They can also help develop good muscle tone in children/young people with other physical problems. The Physiotherapist can advise on aids to help development.

The Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) – helps children/young people who may have difficulties with the development of language and communication skills and advise on feeding and swallowing difficulties.

Community

The Social Worker – a Social Worker may be allocated to you. The Social Worker may help with any problems with regard to the whole family, which may arise in the early months and years especially associated with your child/young person with a vision impairment. The Social Worker most likely to support will be from the Children with Disabilities Team.

The Health Visitor – is a trained nurse who may be able to provide you with a list of experts and their contact details in your area. The Health Visitor normally visits you and your baby at home and can be very supportive in identifying vision impairment and in encouraging your General Practitioner to take further action.

Education

The Educational Psychologist – is employed by the Local Authority and may be a qualified teacher. The Education Psychologist is the person who will assess a child/young person's learning needs and social skills and often co-ordinates assessments of children/young people for Statements. This person is most likely to be involved with your child/young person after the age of two when many children/young people are statutorily assessed prior to early educational support.



Local Authority

It is essential that you make contact with your local authority service for the education for children/young people with a vision impairment. Every local authority throughout the UK should have one. They may be called The Sensory Support Service and sometimes they may be called Special Education Sensory Support Service. If you call your local authority (where you pay your council tax) hopefully, you will be transferred to the right department. The service has qualified teachers of visual impairment and early years' specialists. If you have any difficulty, please contact NBCS and we can make the referral for you or give you details of whom you need to contact.

The QTVI (Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired) – a qualified teacher of children/young people with a vision impairment who provides support and advice to parents, teachers and statementing officers throughout the child/young person's school years and will visit at home or at the school your child/young person attends. The QTVI will most likely follow your child/young person throughout the education years and may visit you and your child/young person at home in the early years following diagnosis.

The Portage Worker – a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children/young people with disabilities, providing support to your child/young person assisting with the development of play, communication and relationships, by providing a programme to build on. Portage Workers are not available in all areas of the UK.

The Rehabilitation/Mobility Officer/ROVIC (Rehabilitation Officer Visually Impaired Children) – helps to train children/young people with vision impairment in life skills and independent living skills both indoors and outside, for example, how to cross roads and may also introduce programmes to include cane techniques.

The Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) – is a staff member in a school who co-ordinates all the special educational needs provision. Every school has to have a SENCO. In smaller schools, the head teacher or deputy head might be the SENCO.



Habilitation Specialist - habilitation combines both mobility and orientation training with the teaching of the life-skills needed to perform everyday tasks. The skills and strategies taught by Habilitation Specialists help children/young people with vision impairment to develop in line with their sighted peers, enabling them to achieve the greatest possible independence and to maximise their educational outcomes and life chances.

For further support contact:

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