

Department of Optometry, Oxford Eye Hospital

# Low Vision Services for Adults in Oxfordshire

Information for patients



# What is Low Vision?

A person is described as having low vision when vision is reduced even when both eyes are open and the correct spectacles are worn. It can cause difficulties when performing everyday tasks such as reading.

There are a number of eye conditions that can result in low vision. Whilst treatment is available for some eye conditions, it is not always possible to restore perfect vision. It is important in the first instance that you are seen by an Ophthalmologist (eye doctor) to make a diagnosis (find the reason why your vision is reduced). Your community Optometrist or GP can make the referral to the Ophthalmology (eye) service for you.

There are a vast number of services available in Oxfordshire for people with low vision. This leaflet outlines some of these services, particularly local services, available.

## Ophthalmology Services

Individuals with poor central vision or poor edge vision have usually already been seen by an Ophthalmologist for advice about their condition. However, if new questions arise, particularly regarding new therapies or changes in the existing condition, a referral to an Ophthalmologist can be arranged by your community Optometrist or GP.

# Visual Aids Clinic or 'Low vision clinic'

The Optometry department at the Oxford Eye Hospital runs a visual aids clinic. You can request to be seen in Oxford, Banbury, Witney or Wantage for a visual aids assessment.

After discussing your needs and requirements, the Optometrist will conduct an eye examination to make sure that your spectacles are correct.

There are a range of devices available to help you make the most of your vision. Magnifiers / optical aids are one type of device available. There are different strengths and types of magnifier available, depending on your vision and the task you would like to do. The hospital Optometrist will assess your vision and work with you to find the most appropriate magnifier to optimise your vision. They will also demonstrate a variety of non-optical and electronic aids.

The optical aids are available on a free loan basis from the hospital eye service. These aids can be exchanged at subsequent visits if your vision or vision needs change.

Your hospital Optometrist will give you additional information on optimising your vision and/ or refer you to other relevant services.

To access the visual aids service you need your GP, your Ophthalmologist (if you are under the hospital eye service) or your community Optometrist to refer you. You do not need to be registered as sight impaired/ severely sight impaired to use this service.

# Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO)

The ECLO is based at the Eye Hospital in Oxford. They will be available at the time of a diagnosis of visual impairment to give emotional support and further information about the relevant services in Oxfordshire.

Referrals are taken from Ophthalmologists and hospital Optometrists.

## Genetic Counselling

Sometimes, but not always, conditions that cause low vision are hereditary (run in families) and /or have a clear genetic cause. Having a genetic condition in the family can raise questions and have implications, not only for you, but others in the family.

At the Oxford Eye Hospital a specialist ophthalmic genetics clinic is available. This is supported by an Ophthalmic Genetic Counsellor (nurse or other professional with expertise in genetics). These clinics are aimed at addressing your 'genetic-related' questions.

### **How might genetic counselling help me?**

The doctors and genetic counsellor can help you in several ways:

- Making or confirming a diagnosis.
- Providing information about the eye condition.
- Discussing the risk, if any, that you may be affected by the condition in the future.

- Discussing the risk, if any, that your children may inherit the condition.
- Explaining what genetic tests might be available.
- Talking about the support available to you and ways of coping with the condition.

If you have any concerns or questions about the genetics of your condition please discuss these at first with your Ophthalmologist or GP. If appropriate, he or she can make a referral to the ophthalmic genetics clinic.

## County Council Services

### **Rehabilitation Services**

Rehabilitation services are provided by Social and Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council. They assess people of all ages who have sight loss and cover three key areas:

- **Independent living skills** (covering personal care, cooking, organising and lighting).
- **Communications** (covering existing communications skills, optimising useful vision by strategies such as learning to use 'off centre vision' (eccentric viewing) if appropriate, using a PC, Braille, local and national talking book services and electronic visual aids).
- **Mobility** (covering current levels of mobility, use of different cane types such as symbol canes, guide canes, and long canes with appropriate training programmes).

They also offer advice on benefits and services available to visually impaired people. Clients can be seen at home, within their workplace, in their school or at the offices in Abingdon.

Referrals into the service can be in the form of a letter from the GP, a "Letter of Visual Impairment" (LVI) available from high street optometrists, or a Referral of Visual Impairment (RVI) or Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) from the hospital. Alternatively you can contact them directly via the details below:

### **The Visual Impairment Team**

(Social & Community Services)

Foxcombe Court

Wyndyke Furlong

Abingdon Business Park

Abingdon OX14 1DZ

Telephone: 01865 894 935

Email: [visual.impairment@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:visual.impairment@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Library Services**

The library service is able to offer the visually impaired a number of reading options such as large print books and books on CD and tape.

The Dolphin 'Supernova' package is on all public library computers – making it easier to access the internet or type a piece of work using Microsoft Word.

## **Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB)**

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind is a charity organisation that has an open door policy – everyone is welcome. However, to make the most of your visit it is suggested that you phone in advance.

OAB provide a range of services including:

- Information, advice and equipment (including daily living aids and electronic reading aids) from their sight advisory centre, Abingdon Road, Oxford.
- Information and advice from their sight advisory desk at Oxford Eye Hospital.
- Counselling services specifically relating to Visual impairment
- A quarterly newsletter available in large print or on audio cassette.
- Support from an experienced welfare officer and home visiting service for Oxford City residents.
- Transcription services.
- Agents for British Wireless Fund for the Blind.

Their contact details are:

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind  
Bradbury Lodge  
Gordon Woodward Way  
Abingdon Road  
Oxford OX1 4XL

Tel: 01865 725595

[www.oxeyes.org.uk](http://www.oxeyes.org.uk)

# Support Groups

## **The Oxfordshire Blind Support Group**

Offer advice on benefits and advocacy

Dennis Freeman (Chair)                      Tel: 01608 642887

Daphne Dorman (Secretary)              Tel: 01993 811084

## **Macular Disease Support Groups**

Macular degeneration causes loss of central vision and is the leading cause of registered vision impairment. Contact the Macular Disease Society for further advice and information about local self-help groups in Oxfordshire.

Helpline: 0845 241 2041

Email: [help@maculardisease.org](mailto:help@maculardisease.org)

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **[PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk)**

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