

# SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH A VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN SOMERSET

## AN OVERVIEW

There is a huge range of services in the community to improve the lives of people with a visual impairment. These services are available to both registered and nonregistered people.

### Low Vision Service

- Assessment of visual performance and visual goals
- Assessment of anti-glare needs and lighting requirements
- Trials of a wide range of low vision aids, filters and task lighting
- Provision of low vision aids on loan



### Adult Social Care

- Assessment of needs and provision of equipment
- Social work support, advice and information
- Rehabilitation – teaching of independent living skills and mobility
- Referral to other specialist services and organisations



### Somerset Sight

- Information, Advice and Social Activities
- Resource and equipment centre
- Mobile Resource Vehicle
- Training in the use of information technology



### Services for children

- Education – Vision Support Team, consisting of advisory teachers who support children from birth to aged 18
- National Blind Children's Society, providing support for visually-impaired children and their families



### Macular Disease Society

- Support group
- Advice, support and information on accessing treatments
- Counselling

### Retinitis Pigmentosa Society

- Advice, information and counselling
- Social activities



*There is a lot that can be done – Please Read On !*

# Where to Start – How to Refer

## Low Vision Service

The Low Vision Clinic Services are available at Musgrove Park and Somerset Sight in Taunton, as well as at a number of “Outreach” venues around the county. The Service is provided by Optima Low Vision Services and is funded by Somerset PCT. Patients referred will be assessed for their visual goals and provided with Low Vision Aids and Anti-glare filters on long term loan, they will also be trained how to maximise the use of their poor vision and offered advice on appropriate lighting. This service can accept referrals from Ophthalmologists, Optometrists, G.P.’s, Social Service professionals and Specialist Teachers. Patients need to have a diagnosed visual impairment and be registered with a Somerset G.P. to be eligible to receive this service.



## Adult Social Care

Specialist workers for people with a visual impairment are based in Adult Social Care offices around the county. They can provide support, advice and information, and link people to the wide range of services that are available locally and nationally for people with sight loss. These services are available to anyone with a sight loss, whether registered or not. All referrals should go through Somerset Direct; Telephone: 0845 345 9133



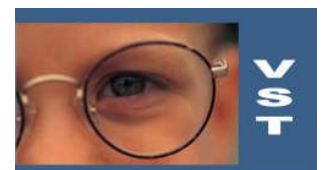
## Children’s Services

Somerset Vision Support Team consists of Qualified Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Specialist Higher Level Teaching Assistants and a Specialist Mobility Officer. We work in Local Authority schools, including special schools, pre-school settings and the home. We become involved with children from the point of diagnosis and remain involved through pre-school into and through school until children and young people move out of local authority provision. Our core aim is to provide curricular access for any child who meets our referral criteria from birth up to 16 (or older if in Local Authority Sixth Form).

For more information and to view the referral criteria please go to:

<http://www.six.somerset.gov.uk/eis/>

- Sensory, Physical & Medical Support tab
- Vision Support Team



## **Somerset Sight**

Somerset Sight is the only independent charity working with visually impaired people in Somerset. We offer support and practical advice to people diagnosed with a visual impairment. Our Resource Centre is based at Northfield House and is open every week day. Our trained staff can demonstrate and advise on the latest equipment available to enable visually impaired people to remain as independent as possible. There is no requirement to be registered as visually impaired. We can offer training for businesses, health care professionals and the community and operate a Befriending Service in partnership with Somerset County Council Adult Social Care dept. At the Ophthalmic Clinics in Taunton and Yeovil, trained volunteers are available to offer patients advice and guidance.  
Contact: Somerset Sight, Northfield House, 51 Staplegrove Road, Taunton, TA1 1DG; Tel. 01823 333818



## **Macular Disease Society**

As well as providing a national campaigning function, a national advice and counselling service, the MDS supports local self help groups around the UK. There is an active local MDS group in Somerset  
Call the MDS Helpline for details 0845 241 2041

## **Retinitis Pigmentosa Society**

There is a local RP group in Somerset offering support for people with RP and their families, carers, professionals, etc. The RP society nationally offers information, advice and counselling. The groups also organise some fund raising events (all money raised goes to research)  
Call the RP Helpline for details 0845 123 2354

## **Other Services**

In addition to the above locally based support services there is a wide range of regional and national services available to people with a visual impairment in Somerset. These include Action for Blind People, Royal Institute for Blind People, Guide Dogs for the Blind. Access to Work schemes and many more. By referring people to the local services onward referral to these other services can be achieved as appropriate.

## Contact Details at a Glance

- **Optima Low Vision Services**  
Dartside, Ford Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5SP  
Tel. 01803 864218  
FAX. 01803 840107  
e-mail [info@optimalowvision.co.uk](mailto:info@optimalowvision.co.uk)  
[www.optimalowvision.co.uk](http://www.optimalowvision.co.uk)
- **Adult Care**  
SOMERSET DIRECT – 0845 345 9133
- **Children's Vision Support Team**  
<http://www.six.somerset.gov.uk/eis/>  
→ Sensory, Physical & Medical  
Support tab → Vision Support  
Team. Tel 01749 678500
- **Somerset Sight**  
Northfield House, 51 Staplegrove Road,  
Taunton, TA1 1DG.  
Tel. 01823 333818  
[www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk)
- **Macular Disease Society**  
PO Box 1870 Andover Hampshire SP10 9AD  
Phone: 0845 241 2041  
Fax: 01264 350558  
Email: [info@maculardisease.org](mailto:info@maculardisease.org)  
[www.maculardisease.org](http://www.maculardisease.org)
- **Retinitis Pigmentosa Society**  
National RP Helpline 0845 123 2354  
PO Box 350, Buckingham MK18 1GZ  
Email [info@brps.org.uk](mailto:info@brps.org.uk)  
[www.brps.org.uk](http://www.brps.org.uk)