

Starting Point

A guide for parents and carers
whose child has a vision impairment



**“We wanted a map of the next few years.
We really wanted to know what do we do next.”**



Introduction

This leaflet introduces you to the help and support you may want as the parents and carers of a child with a vision impairment.

Your child's diagnosis

On hearing that your child has a vision impairment, you may feel like your world has been turned upside down.

It is natural to experience many emotions which may include shock, fear, grief, sadness and despair.

You may even feel relief that your child's sight problem is at last being taken seriously. All of these feelings are quite common and could be part of the process you will go through during the early weeks and months. You may have left the consulting room in a daze and may not have heard all the words that were said to you during the consultation.

You may be asking yourself what happens next and what the future holds for your child.

You will probably need some time to adjust, but one of the most useful actions you can take is to get in touch with your local vision impairment education service.

They have specialist teachers who will work with you and your child to support their early play, development and learning.

If you have not already made contact with a specialist teacher, then get in touch with the organisations that have the experience, knowledge and skills to support you through Starting Point and we will find the service details for you.

“ We'll explain all the medical jargon ”

How we can help

You probably have a million different questions. You may want to know which organisations can help you, what resources are available or simply want to know “what do I do next?” You may also want to meet other parents and carers who have been through a similar experience. And that’s where Starting Point can help.

Starting Point draws from the expertise of vision impairment charities and children’s hospitals and ensures you can access trusted information.

We can:

- explain your child’s sight condition and treatment
- help you understand what your child can see
- provide access to training and advice on your child’s early development and play
- put you in touch with other parents and carers
- connect you to national and local support organisations including local authority vision impairment services
- explain medical jargon and the role of health and social care professionals who can support you

- provide emotional and practical support for the whole family
- offer information and advice on what benefits you may be entitled to and how to apply

Looking ahead

There’s no right or wrong time to look ahead. Some parents and carers look to the future straight away, whilst others prefer to take it one day at a time. The important thing to remember is that whenever you are ready, Starting Point can help you enjoy the countless special moments and milestones of being a parent or carer, from advice about your child starting nursery or school through to enjoying hobbies and even going to work.



Our advice areas include:

- early years – how to help your child find out about the world
- education – starting school, university and beyond, and the role of specialist teachers
- leisure activities – making sure your child gets the most out of their hobbies and friendships, plus family weekends, events and regional activities
- supporting independence – advice on habilitation (mobility and living skills)
- health issues – information on eye conditions and therapies, and the professionals you may meet

Access Starting Point today

To find out more, visit our online information today at vision2020uk.org.uk/startingpoint

If you would prefer to talk to someone, you can also contact us through our Helplines.

Action for Blind People/RNIB
0303 123 9999

Blind Children UK/Guide Dogs
0800 781 1444

Visionary (for local organisations)
0208 090 9264

You can also contact your local information, advice and support services.



Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the organisations who gave their support in producing this guide and to the parents and carers who helped us shape Starting Point. VISION 2020 UK is the umbrella organisation which leads collaboration and co-operation between organisations with an interest in eye health and sight loss.