**Provision under pressure:**

Gaps in Educational Support for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment in England (2023)

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**Foreword**

This year’s annual education Freedom of Information (FOI) survey conducted by RNIB in Autumn 2023, yet again presents an ever changing, fluctuating picture with some concerning trends and shifts in education provision across England's 152 local authorities.

We are grateful to local authorities for completing this survey every year. It gives the education sector invaluable information, data, evidence and trends pertaining to local authority (LA) vision impairment (VI) services in England.

The Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI) launched in March 2022. It is now nearly two years old and evidence of its use at a professional level is clearly showing. However, for the framework to have optimum positive impact on children and young people with vision impairment, there needs to be consistent, high quality specialist provision in place, regardless of the fluctuating socio-economic environment. Yet our FOI shows that this is not the case, meaning the outcomes for children with vision impairment risk being adversely affected by specialist services coming under increased pressure.

Data shows us there are more children and young people requiring and accessing specialist support, yet many services have experienced inconsistent funding - with budgets fluctuating year-on-year. This is making planning provision increasingly problematic. As provision becomes ever more stretched, we remain concerned that access to vital specialist support is being reduced, impacting not only children’s education but also opportunities in later life.

To ensure children and young people with VI have equitable access to education, we need action from the Department for Education to ensure provision is delivered more consistently through sufficient numbers of specialist education professionals and adequate and protected funding.

**Caireen Sutherland**

Head of Education, RNIB

**Glossary**

Here we explain the acronyms used in this report with their definitions. For ease, we have used some terms - such as teaching assistant - but we acknowledge different terms are used both across England and elsewhere. There are two columns in this table. The first column contains the acronym, and the second column contains the definition.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CFVI** | Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment |
| **CYP** | Children and Young People |
| **DfE** | Department for Education |
| **EHCP** | Education, Health and Care Plan |
| **FOI** | Freedom of Information |
| **FTE** | Full-time Equivalent |
| **HI** | Hearing Impairment |
| **LA** | Local Authority |
| **MQ** | Mandatory Qualification |
| **MSI** | Multi-sensory Impairment |
| **NatSIP** | National Sensory Impairment Partnership |
| **QTMSI** | Qualified Teacher of children and young people with Multi-Sensory Impairment |
| **QTVI** | Qualified Teacher of children and young people with Vision Impairment |
| **SEN** | Special Educational Needs |
| **SEND** | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities |
| **TA** | Teaching Assistant |
| **ToD** | Teacher of the Deaf |
| **VI** | Vision Impairment |

**Executive Summary**

There are more than 31,000 children and young people living with a vision impairment (VI) in England. Each child’s needs will be individual, varying from infrequent visits to more intensive input. However, depending on where they live, there is no guarantee that they will get the support that they need to learn, develop and thrive.

This year’s research into local authority provision builds on the data that RNIB has built up over many years and paints a mixed picture. In some ways provision has improved, where budgets seem to have increased. Yet the structure of support, the number of specialist staff and the funding varies significantly.

Importantly, nearly a quarter of services have seen their budgets frozen or cut in the last year. The impact of freezes has also been compounded by high inflation. Our data showed over half of local authorities did not receive a budget increase in line with average inflation in 2023/24, instead facing a real term decrease to their budget. At the same time, the number of children and young people using VI services has increased, so local authorities must make their budgets stretch further and further.

This research provides a vital insight into how our society values children and young people with VI, and the degree to which we are investing in their wellbeing, educational attainment, and their aspirations for the future. It’s too important to ignore, and we urge the Secretary of State both to fund the specialist workforce that’s urgently needed, and to provide the protected ‘high needs’ funding which local authorities must be able to access if they are to enable all children and young people to thrive.

**Key findings**

**Caseload and capacity - rising caseloads**

* Total number of children and young people on active vision impairment service caseloads, or known to services, is 31,165 across 137 LAs in England.
* This caseload represents an increase of 2 per cent on the previous year. Caseloads have also increased year on year since 2020.
* 57 per cent of LAs have reported a decrease or freeze in the number of QTVIs over the last year despite rising caseloads. Whilst this is an improvement on the previous year, this remains likely to affect support for almost half of all CYP accessing VI specialist support.
* There are a total of 605 FTE posts for QTVIs across 135 local authorities; this figure is inclusive of those in training or due to begin training.
* Of the authorities that provided data, the total number of CYP that use braille as their sole or main literacy medium across England is 773. It is these CYP that will require the highest levels of support.
* The rise in demand for support and the caseload increase means that many authorities are, in reality, either freezing or decreasing their resource levels, resulting in support becoming increasingly stretched.

**Service provision – More than half of budgets have had real term cuts**

* 24 per cent of authorities have seen their budgets cut or frozen over the last year. This means that almost one in four CYP are impacted by budget cuts or freezes.
* When inflation in 2023/24 is factored in we see a real term budget cuts for 57 per cent of local authorities. These local authorities did not receive a budget increase in line with average inflation in 2023/24.
* In the past five years, 50 authorities have seen their budget cut at least once, which represents a quarter of local authorities.

**Habilitation – more CYP waiting for assessments than last year**

* Habilitation involves one-to-one training for children and young people with vision impairment. Starting from their existing skills, it aims to develop their personal mobility, navigation and independent living skills.
* Of the total children on the LA VI service active caseload, 14 per cent are receiving or waiting to be assessed for habilitation support – a decline of 2 per cent on the previous year.
* 4,443 CYP are currently on active habilitation caseloads, a 5 per cent increase on last year. More worryingly a further 800 CYP are waiting to be assessed, a 37 per cent increase from last year.

**Curriculum Framework for Children Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI)**

* 100 per cent of LAs stated that they were aware of the CFVI showing an improvement from the FOI issued in 2022.

**Introduction**

Provision for specialist educational support for children with vision impairment (VI) is essential to ensure they are not disadvantaged in their education and that they are able to develop the life skills they need in order to reach their full potential.

In October 2023, RNIB contacted all 152 local authorities in England, asking a range of questions about current and future education provision for children and young people with VI. Since the previous year one council has split in two and two have been merged.

We got an overall response rate of 95 per cent, which equates to 145 out of 152 local authorities responding, including responses from two consortiums covering multiple local authorities. This is an increase of four per cent from 2022. For the purpose of the analysis, comparisons will be made based on 139 local authority responses, unless otherwise stated. This is the total number of local authorities that responded individually and can be directly compared with previous years.

The FOI request to the local authorities covered the following key themes:

* Organisation and funding of Education Vision Impairment (VI) Advisory service
* Structure of services
* Number of CYP on the VI service caseload and support available
* VI service staffing
* Habilitation support
* Registers
* Use of the Curriculum Framework for Children/Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI)

**Findings**

**Service provision and organisation**

**Funding arrangements**

We received responses from 139 local authorities (LAs) out of 152. Funding arrangements were declared as follows:

**Table 1. Showing the funding arrangements for CYP VI services by proportion and number of LAs.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Funding arrangement** | **Proportion of LAs** | **Number of LAs** |
| Centrally funded | 94 per cent | 130 |
| Partially delegated to schools | 1 per cent | 2 |
| Fully delegated to schools | 2 per cent | 3 |
| Other | 1 per cent | 2 |
| No VI service | 1 per cent | 2 |

The percentage of local authorities who stated that specialist support for pupils with VI was centrally funded has increased between 2020, at 87 per cent, and 2023, to 94 per cent.   
  
Who manages the central budget is significant; if the central budget is managed by non-specialists with little to no input from VI specialists this could potentially have an adverse impact on provision, support and structure including resources, staffing etc.

The two authorities who stated that there is no designated VI budget, however, stated that money is taken from wider service budget if required.

**Changes to provision**

In the previous 12 months, 27 per cent of authorities made changes to the way provision for CYP with VI is funded or organised, whereas 71 per cent said no changes were made. The remaining 2 per cent of LAs either omitted to respond to this question or selected ‘don’t know’ as their answer. Chart 1 below shows a visual representation of this.

**Chart 1. A pie chart showing the proportion of local authorities who had, or had not, made changes to their service provision in the previous 12 months.**

All 37 local authorities that had actively made changes to provision over the last 12 months provided additional information surrounding this.

Encouragingly, changes amongst nearly half (46 per cent) of these local authorities were largely positive, indicating some service expansion. Of these, two fifths of local authorities increased their budget and/or staffing allowance to allow for hiring additional QTVIs, sensory support staff and qualified habilitation specialists in order to deliver services efficiently and meet the demands on their service.

Comments reflected increased budgets and staffing (there were reports from some LAs that they had employed both QTVIs and support staff, often on a part-time basis, to support the needs of children with VI within their authority). Other LAs reported here that they had committed to staff training.

Whilst many LAs were able to successfully recruit for the various posts they had within their VI service, even amongst those who expanded their service, there were LAs who reported having difficulty or being unable to fill these positions with qualified staff, most notably QTVI and Habilitation officer posts. Some authorities are using the services of external agencies as an interim or alternative measure but in a small number there are no immediate plans to fill vacant posts or provide cover for long-term absence.

“Habilitation vacancy was difficult to replace following previous Habilitation officer leaving the service.”

Most concerningly, in one authority, a vacant QTVI post was removed from the structure.

In contrast, a quarter (24 per cent) of local authorities experienced a loss of specialist staff or have ongoing vacancies that are yet to be filled, or have changes to their provision reducing what they can fund (e.g. no top up allowances or reduction to the funding of non-specialist equipment).

“One QTVI position was made vacant and this vacant post has now been removed from the service. As a result, there have [been] amendments to caseload allocations to ensure everyone is covered.”

“There is now a banding system in place for those children with VI and an EHCP and there is no top up funding.”

“We no longer fund any non specialist equipment; iPads and laptops are all funded by settings.”

There was even mention of a reduction to vital and high needs support due to a recruitment freeze within an LA. Ultimately this would mean very high needs children and young people with VI (i.e. those whose main or sole literacy medium is or should be braille) would likely see a reduction in the support they require to enable the development of literacy skills within that LA.

“Unable to provide 1:1 Braille support officer due to recruitment freeze put in place by LA. Supporting schools with their staff and training.”

The remaining LAs reported changes including merging of service with other SEND services, TUPED staff for a more centralised budget and the employment of agency-based Habilitation staff to address rising numbers of CYP requiring habilitation.

In 2023 LAs reported that 494 CYP had their support reduced due to service capacity issues or a restructure of the delivery model, compared to 293 CYP in 2022. Some LAs omitted to answer this question, meaning the true figure could be higher each year. For the minority of LAs who provided additional information along with this answer they often cited staffing issues and increased service pressure as their main reasons for a reduction in service for CYP with VI within their LA.

“There is overall reduced provision for total caseload due to reduced capacity to meet need. This appears to be due to more new referrals (attributed to a raised awareness of service delivery), some high need new referrals and increasing admin pressures.”

“We are constantly adjusting visit levels to pupils based on our capacity to deliver a service to an increasing caseload without any additional staffing.”

Even some of those who stated that no CYP with VI had their service reduced stated that capacity was an issue for them and that prioritisation of their caseload was necessary and likely would be necessary going forward, and in some cases had already caused a potential reduction in support:

“The rising number of referrals has meant we have had to prioritise CYPs level of support more stringently this year.”

**Proposed changes to provision**

When asked if local authorities had any current or proposed reviews of the VI service that will affect the way it’s organised, managed and funded, 67 per cent said no, 26 per cent said yes and 7 per cent said they didn't know or did not provide an answer for this. Four local authorities did not provide any additional information surrounding this. Chart 2 below shows a visual representation of this.

**Chart 2. A pie chart showing the proportions for local authorities who have or do not have proposed changes to their service provision in the next 12 months.**

**Budget**

We asked authorities to provide the service budget across three separate years, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. This is based on 125 LAs for which we have valid budget information.

Not all local authorities were able to provide all the years requested and not all were able to separate the VI service budget from the overall sensory support budget or other combined budgets. We therefore remain unable to paint as accurate a picture of service budgets in England as we would like.

**Short term funding trends**

Some 116 authorities provided numerical budget figures, and it was possible to analyse trend data for 114 individual authorities. A quarter (24 per cent) of authorities have seen their budgets being cut or frozen over the last year. If we compare these figures to the year before, the overall number of LAs that have faced budget cuts and freezes has decreased by 14 per cent. Chart 3 visually displays the proportion of local authorities with a budget increase, decrease or freeze.

**Chart 3. A pie chart showing the proportion of LAs with a budget change in 2023/24.**

However, the 24 per cent of authorities who have seen their budgets cut or frozen support 23 per cent (7,262) of CYP with VI in England.

This means that almost one in four CYP are impacted by budget cuts or freezes.

Of the LAs who provided valid budget responses, three quarters (75 per cent) had a budget increase in 2023/24. The number of LAs that have seen a budget increase has also risen by just over a quarter (28 per cent) since last year.

### Budget change in line with inflation

In a year of high inflation, it is important this is included in the analysis of budgets.

When inflation for 2023/24 is factored in, the picture for local authority budgets becomes even worse. Our analysis found over half of local authorities (57 per cent) did not receive a budget increase in line with average inflation in 2023/24. This represents a real term cut for 65 of the 114 LAs we could gain useable budget information for.

An average 6 per cent was used to measure whether budgets rose in line with inflation as this represents the variation in inflation throughout the financial year (which started at 8 per cent at the beginning of 2023/24 and ended at 4 per cent at the time this report was written).

**Long term funding trends**

Whilst the funding situation seems, overall, to have improved from the previous year, it remains inconsistent and unpredictable. With many local authorities struggling financially, it’s important to continuously monitor long term trends to identify budget cuts and pressure points nationally, regionally and locally. The analysis below is taken from 80 local authorities that provided some budget data for the past five years.

In the past five years, 50 authorities have seen their budget cut at least once. This represents almost a third of all local authorities (33 per cent). These authorities with unstable funding provision support a third of the total number of children and young people with VI on active caseload. It is also important to consider budget freezes, which commonly amount to real term budget cuts amidst the increased costs of services due to high inflation. Five local authorities experienced a budget freeze across two years (2022/23 and 2023/24) and two local authorities experienced a budget freeze over five consecutive years up to and including 2023/24.

**Impact on support to CYP**

There has been an increase in children and young people using VI services across England, with the total caseload rising to 31,165 CYP from 30,453 in last year's FOI. This means local authorities are having to make their budgets stretch further, which is likely to leave less funding available per head and to stretch what is there across a broad range of need. While some local authorities are recognising the importance of the VI specialist services, others are not making the required investment to maintain service levels, resulting in patchwork provision nationally.

The evidence of fluctuating budgets suggests that service budgets are unpredictable and not secure from one year to the next. However, with the increasing number of children on active caseload, the reason for fluctuating budgets is not entirely clear and is likely to be managed differently in each local authority.

**Regional trends**

Not all authorities provided useable budget data across both 2022/23 and 2023/24. This may have been through not providing a budget this year or in previous years, or because of changes in the local authority (e.g. a local authority splitting in two in 2023) resulting in no comparable information. This means that the local trends across 39 authorities remain unknown. The proportion of LAs with a budget freeze or cut by region is presented in Table 2 below. These regional trends may vary if all authorities had provided accurate budget data.

**Table 2: Regional budget trends, 2022/23 to 2023/24**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Number of LAs** | **Number of LAs providing budget data** | **Proportion of LAs with budget freeze or cuts** | **Number of LAs with budget freeze or cut** |
| East Midlands | 9 | 6 | 50 per cent | 3 |
| North East | 12 | 10 | 33 per cent | 3 |
| South West | 16 | 10 | 30 per cent | 3 |
| South East | 19 | 17 | 29 per cent | 5 |
| North West | 24 | 16 | 25 per cent | 4 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 15 | 13 | 23 per cent | 3 |
| London | 33 | 20 | 15 per cent | 3 |
| West Midlands | 14 | 13 | 15 per cent | 2 |
| East of England | 11 | 9 | 11 per cent | 1 |

This table shows a fall in the proportion of LAs who have had a budget cut or freeze since the last report.

It remains worrying that 24 per cent LAs in England received a budget cut or freeze. During a period of high inflation, this will lead to a reduction in spend potential.

**Children and young people supported by services**

**Caseload**

The total number of children and young people aged 0-25 on vision impairment service caseloads in England, or those known to services, is 31,165 in the year 2023/24. This figure represents responses from 137 LAs who responded with an actual figure Some 27,210 are on active service caseloads with a further 3,955 CYP known to services.

When running a direct comparison to the financial year 2019/20, there has been an overall increase in caseload of 4 per cent in four years. Between 2022 and 2023 there was a more modest change of 2 per cent.

To compare the LAs who responded for both years, there was a caseload increase of 6 per cent with an additional 1,683 CYP on caseloads or known to service in 2023/24 compared with 2019/20. For LAs that answered in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, the number of CYP on caseload or known to service increased by 1 per cent (298 CYP).

Whilst 100 per cent of local authorities who answered for both 2019/20 and 2023/24 saw a budget increase, 19 per cent of LAs who responded in both 2022/23 and 2023/24 saw a budget decrease or freeze between these two years. It is important to note that the true figure is likely higher as this does not include inflation calculations. Additionally, 17 authorities either did not respond to the caseload question or omitted a figure due to data protection in 2023 alone.

**Braille users**

Of the LAs that responded to our FOI, 117 provided a numerical response when asked how many CYP supported by their VI service used braille as their sole or main literacy medium. A further 6 applied exemptions due to low numbers of CYP. The remaining 16 LAs did not provide us with an answer to this question.

The total number of CYP with braille as their sole or main literacy medium who are supported across the 117 local authorities is 773. It is important to note that this question only asked about their main/ sole medium; if we were to consider dual media users then this number would likely be much higher. It is also difficult to get a true picture of the number due to the low number of authorities providing figures. Where LAs have answered ‘less than five’ or ‘less than 10’, these have not been included in the counts. The nature of braille use is that it is low incidence so very likely to be less than 10 in many authorities.

There was a 19 per cent increase in the number of CYP who use braille as their sole or main medium between the FOI in 2022 and in 2023; this is despite more LAs responding with a valid answer in 2022 compared with 2023.

Evidence shows a high rate of fluctuation in the number of children and young people using braille each year. This could be due to a variety of factors but it is speculation at this stage.

* The age of the child or young person – some will naturally drop out of the age bracket we have asked about/the LA supports.
* Because some CYP start by using only braille before technology/other strategies are introduced, braille ceases to be their sole or even main form of literacy.
* There is a significant difference in both the number of and which local authorities respond each year. Whilst some consistently respond and answer this question, others do not answer this question with a numerical figure each year.

This means that the numbers provided each year do not reflect the true picture on the use of braille in education and it is impossible to draw conclusions as to whether the number of CYP is increasing, decreasing or remaining the same.

**Register of sight impaired and severely sight impaired people – for children**

Our FOI request found that the responsibility for registration of a certificate of vision impairment (CVI) for children varies greatly across England. We asked local authorities which team was responsible for holding the register for children and young people who are sight impaired (SI) or severely sight impaired (SSI). More than half (56 per cent) of the responding LAs said it was held by the Social Care Children’s disability team. Some 24 per cent said it was held by the education/SEND/sensory teams, while 11 per cent said it was held by a local society for blind people/sight loss or sensory society on behalf of the local authority. An additional 19 per cent said that either someone else held the register, or they did not know who was responsible for holding this. A total of 13 LAs reported that more than one of the options given were responsible for holding the register of CYP registered as SI or SSI.

There are 10,145 CYP aged 0 – 17 registered as Severely Sight Impaired (SSI) or Sight Impaired (SI) in England (2020), representing just a third of the children and young people aged 0-25 on VI service caseloads or known to services. The findings highlight that CYP are under-represented on registers.

We understand that definitions for registration may be narrower than definitions used for CYP to access support from the VI education services. It is also likely that differences in the age ranges between the two datasets may be responsible for some of the gap.

Despite this, the existence and accuracy of children’s registers for vision impairment remains a source of considerable concern due to the inconsistent recording and lack of accurate data.

**Support allocation and EHCP provision**

When asked about the criteria used for allocating levels of support, local authorities were able to select multiple answers. From 139 authorities answering the question Chart 1 below shows the most frequently used.

**Chart 4. Chart showing tools used for support allocation.**

We asked LAs whether CYP with VI had to meet any of the following criteria before they would be considered for an assessment for an EHCP. These criteria were:

* The decision is made based on the individual’s needs.
* They must meet a specified level of severity/visual acuity.
* They must have additional SEND.
* They must be failing to make the expected level of progress.
* They are expected to attend a special school.
* Other criteria.

Local authorities could select more than one. Worryingly, 27 per cent of authorities stated CYP must meet a specific level of severity/ visual acuity (up from 22 per cent the previous year). An additional 16 per cent said CYP must be failing to make the expected level of progress (up from 9 per cent last year), one per cent said they are expected to attend a special school (down from four per cent) and a further five per cent said they must have additional SEND (up from two per cent the previous year).

We also provided an option for authorities to provide any extra information on assessment criteria; 14 per cent of authorities provided this information. Most of the authorities that responded stated that CYP must have a medical diagnosis, involvement of an ophthalmologist or a CVI.

The wide variation across authorities in criteria used to assess for an EHCP could lead to very different levels of support being provided to CYP with VI who have similar needs but live in different authorities.

**Teachers and support staff**

**QTVI posts**

In 2022 there were 584 FTE teaching posts in England, with 19 vacancies. Comparatively, in 2023 there are a total of 605 FTE different teaching posts across 135 local authorities that responded with useable data. This figure is inclusive of those in training or due to begin training. There are also an additional 11FTE QTVI vacancies currently unfilled. Table 4 below shows the distribution of qualified teaching staff employed within VI services across the responding LAs.

**Table 4.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Position** | **Number of staff employed in position** | **Proportion of staff employed in position** |
| Lead QTVI with mandatory qualification (MQ) (VI) | 95 | 16 per cent |
| QTVI with mandatory qualification (MQ) (VI) | 375 | 62 per cent |
| In training for MQ (VI) | 81 | 13 per cent |
| Qualified teachers without MQ (VI) who will begin training within 2 years | 10 | 2 per cent |
| QTMSI with MQ (MSI) | 23 | 4 per cent |
| QTVI and QTMSI MQ (holds both qualifications) | 14 | 2 per cent |
| Qualified teachers without MQ (VI) not in or due to begin training within 2 years | 7 | 1 per cent |
| Lead QTVI vacancies currently vacant | 4 | NA |
| QTVI vacancies currently vacant | 7 | NA |

Whilst these figures show low numbers for the number of QTVI vacancies, the significant number of those in training and set to begin training in the next two years is obvious.

Some 57 per cent of LAs have reported a decrease or freeze in the number of QTVIs over the last year despite increasing caseloads. This will likely affect just under half of CYP accessing VI support. Some 44 per cent of LAs have reported an increase in full time QTVIs.

As caseloads and the demand for support continues to increase, many authorities are either freezing or decreasing their resource levels, resulting in support becoming increasingly stretched.

**Teaching assistants**

Some 53 per cent of responding authorities said they employ a specialist teaching assistant (TA). This is a one per cent increase compared to the year before. The total number of TA posts (headcount of both full-time and part-time) across these authorities is 271. This is a 3 per cent decrease since 2022.

Most TAs are employed directly by schools as opposed to sensory services, therefore, gathering an accurate picture of the TA workforce across the country would be very difficult. This move away from LA specialist TAs risks children with VI receiving support from less specialist, skilled TA input.  

**Habilitation**

Habilitation involves one-to-one training for children and young people with VI. Starting from their existing skills, it aims to develop their personal mobility, navigation and independent living skills.

Our FOI found a total of 4,443 pupils currently on active habilitation caseloads, with a further 800 waiting to be assessed. This is a five per cent increase in active habilitation caseload from last year. More worryingly, there is a 37 per cent increase in the number of CYP waiting for habilitation assessments (an increase of 237 CYP from 2022).

Of the CYP on LA VI active caseload, 14 per cent are currently receiving or waiting to be assessed for habilitation support, which represents roughly one in five CYP on active VI caseloads needing or getting habilitation support.

When asked how habilitation services are delivered, well over half of authorities (54 per cent) said they employ a Habilitation Specialist; 43 per cent said an external organisation is commissioned; most commonly this is Guide Dogs, but neighbouring authorities are also used to deliver the service. An additional three per cent said they do not provide habilitation services.

**Curriculum Framework** **for Children Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI)**

When asked if LAs were aware of the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI), 136 LAs gave an answer. Of those who answered, 100 per cent said yes, showing an increase of nine per cent on last year.

We asked local authorities what other frameworks or curriculum they used to support CYP with VI. Authorities were able to select more than one option.

* 89 per cent used Developmental Journal (DJVI)
* 60 per cent used Quality Standards for Habilitation
* 51 per cent used NatSIP Learner Outcomes Framework
* 42 per cent used a bespoke programme designed in house
* 20 per cent used Steps to Independence – the mobility and independence needs of children with vision impairment
* 16 per cent used Guide Dogs’ Habilitation programme
* 14 per cent used Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) – USA

Authorities were asked if they incorporated any aspects of the CFVI in their normal working practices; the majority of authorities said they use it in assessment, planning and report processes.

"We have cross referenced it to our own Preparation for Adulthood tracker (previously developed) and looked at how to incorporate it into our vision management plans.”

"Incorporated into VI and Habilitation reports, shared with SENDCOs and parents, shared with Statutory Assessment team.”

We also asked authorities who answered yes whether they were aware of the CFVI resource hub. Of the 132 LAs who answered, 96 per cent said yes, with three percent saying no and one per cent answering ‘don’t know’.

## Conclusion

Specialist support for children and young people with VI is vital. Whilst this year’s FOI revealed a slightly improved picture regarding budgets, inconsistencies surrounding provision were clear.

To ensure that all CYP with a VI reach their full potential now, and in the future, we are calling on the Secretary of State for Education to:

* Endorse and embed in education policy the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young people with Vision Impairment.
* Fund the training and placement of additional Qualified Teachers of children and young people with Vision Impairment (QTVIs) and Registered Qualified Habilitation Specialists (RQHS) so that all local authority VI education teams are adequately resourced. This should include a clear and fully funded plan of action to improve recruitment and opportunities to qualify into the profession.
* Support the skills development and retention of the current workforce through investment in specialist training and career development opportunities.
* Provide adequate and protected high needs funding for all local authorities to deliver specialist education services which meet the needs of children and young people with VI from 0-25.

### About RNIB’s research

RNIB is a leading source of information on sight loss and the issues affecting blind and partially sighted people. Our Research and Knowledge Hub contains key information and statistics about blind and partially sighted people including our Sight Loss Data Tool, which provides information about sight loss at a local level throughout the UK. You’ll also find research reports on a range of topics including employment, education, technology, accessibility and more. Visit our Knowledge and Research Hub at: **rnib.org.uk/research** or **email research@rnib.org.uk.**