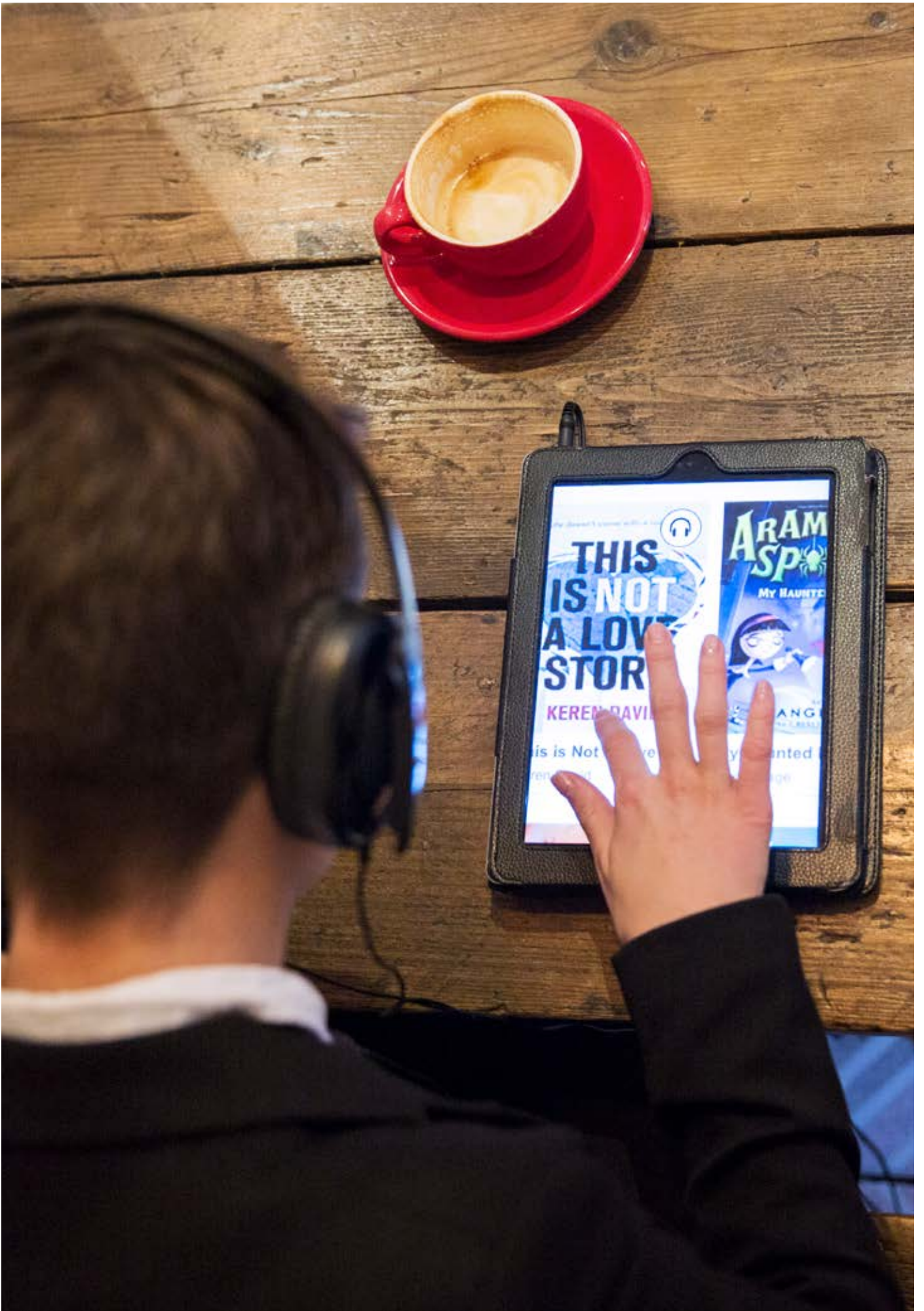


Your future, your choice: bridging the gap

**Supporting your
transition from school
and into adulthood**



Scotland



Contents

Section 1

- 5** Who is this guide for?
- 5** What is transition?

Section 2

- 7** Planning for your future while still at school

Section 3

- 9** Moving on to college or vocational training
- 9** Finding the right college
- 10** What about residential or specialist colleges?
- 11** Supported learning at college

Section 4

- 12** Working while you study
- 12** Apprenticeships
- 13** Inclusion Scotland
- 13** Employability Skills

Section 5

- 14** Work experience and Volunteering
- 14** Work experience
- 15** Volunteering
- 15** Assistive Technology
- 16** Finding Volunteering and Work Experience opportunities
- 18** Gap years

Section 6

- 19** Moving on to university
- 20** Choosing a university

Section 7

- 23** Moving on to work
- 23** Skills Development Scotland
- 23** Job Centre
- 24** Things to tell your potential employer
- 24** The Access to Work scheme
- 25** Interview skills: top tips

Section 8

- 26** Preparing for Independence
- 26** Adjusting the way you work
- 26** Using Low Vision Aids
- 28** Using Assistive technology
- 29** Using Braille
- 30** Speaking out
- 31** Getting around on your own
- 32** Living independently

Section 9

- 33** Know your rights
- 33** The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act
- 33** The Equality Act 2010
- 34** What to do if things go wrong

Section 10

- 35** Benefits and financial help

Section 11

- 37** Useful contacts for more information and support

Acknowledgements

Section 1

Who is this guide for?

This guide is aimed at young people with vision impairment in Scotland, to help you prepare for your future after school. It includes information about a variety of possible pathways including college, higher education, apprenticeships, volunteering, training and employment. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the main information that you will need, and to provide you with links to more comprehensive guidance if required.

The guide will also be helpful as a reference for parents/carers and professionals supporting you through these transitions.

We've looked to bring the guidance to life by including quotes and case studies of other young people with vision impairment. These have been taken from findings of a research study run by Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research at University of Birmingham, with support from RNIB, which has been following the experience of young people with vision impairment as they have made their way through various pathways after school.

What is transition?

Think about your time in education. You'll be familiar with the staff who support you and the adjustments that are made to ensure you can access your subject materials. You may have worksheets and textbooks provided in large print or braille, specialist programs on your computer – or perhaps you have a teaching assistant who takes notes for you in class. Also during that time in education you will have learnt lots of skills including mobility and the use of access technology, and hopefully built up confidence in how to communicate to staff and peers.

At school, both you and the staff are aware of the support that you need to ensure that your vision impairment, and any additional needs you may have, don't interfere with your learning. But have you thought much about what happens when you leave school and go on to college, university or work?

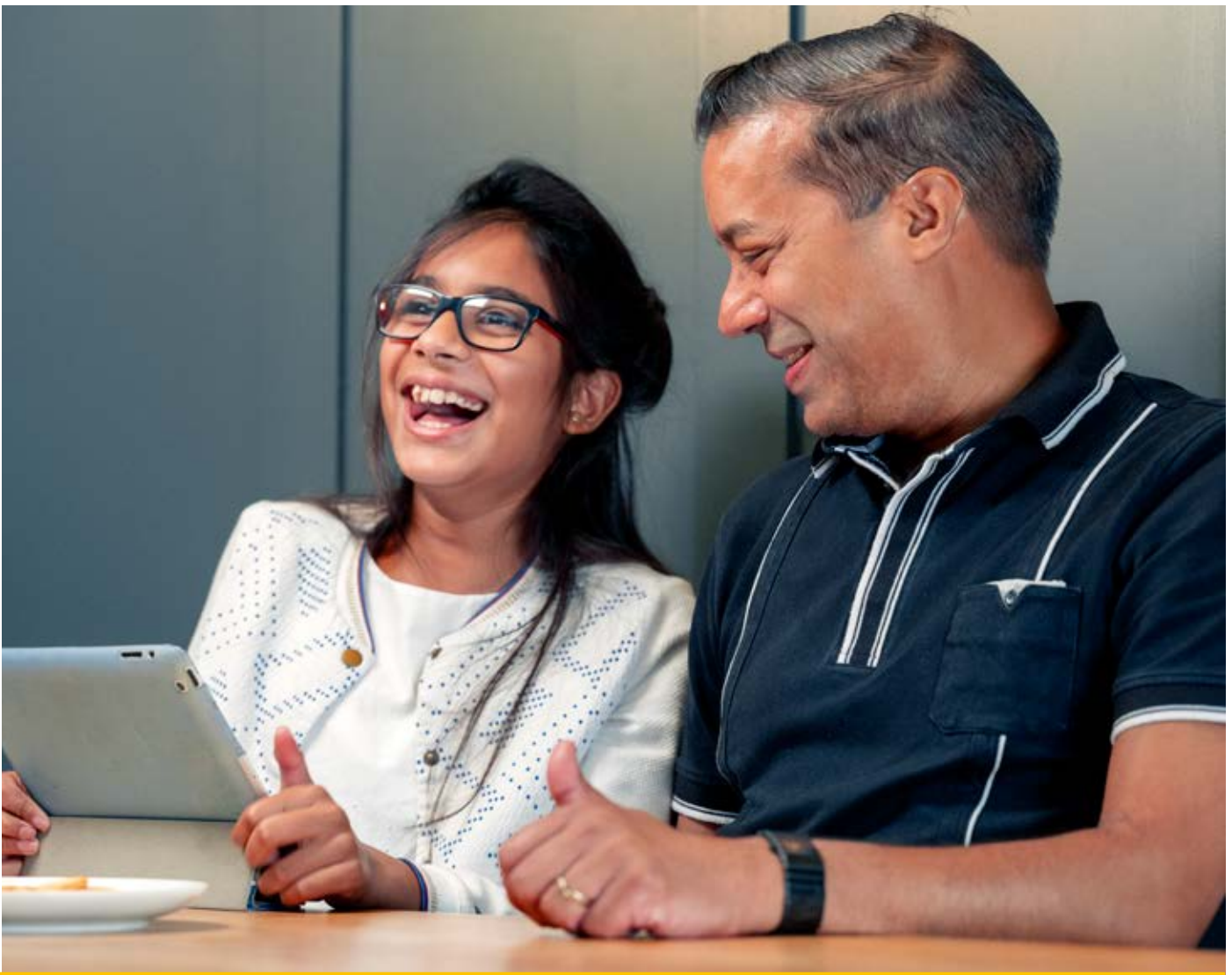
Think of your transition from school and beyond as a series of journeys from one location to another. For example:

- school to employment
- school to college to university to employment
- school to vocational training, apprenticeship or employment

The journeys that get you from one location to another are what we call your points of transition. It's important that you, and the different agencies that support you, plan for these times of change well in advance of them happening. This will ensure that your

move from, let's say, S6 to university is smooth and effective and that you're fully aware of what support you'll get and who will be responsible for providing it. Careful planning is also very important for practical reasons, for example to make sure that you have access to assistive technology, such as screen readers or magnification software, from the outset of your course.

There is a lot of support out there, but you may not be aware of it. Knowing what help is available enables you to take control of your future and allows you the freedom to make informed choices about what you want to do next.



Section 2

Planning for your future while still at school

During S4 you can choose from a number of options about what you want to do next. You may wish to remain at school until you are seventeen or eighteen, or you might choose to attend a local college to study a course there. Alternatively, you might go straight into work. There are lots of options, but planning for your future will begin before you leave school.

From S4 you should have annual transition review meetings to help you plan for your future. These transition meetings are designed to ensure that your views are kept central. These face-to-face meetings should happen at least twelve months before leaving school. This is to ensure that all the necessary preparations can be made to allow your transition to be as smooth as possible. To prepare for these meetings you should consider:

- Meeting with your Skills Development Scotland careers adviser to discuss what subjects you are enjoying and achieving good grades in, which subjects you plan to take for exams and your aspirations for life after school. You might be considering staying on at school, going to a local college, further training or going straight into work.
- Talking to your subject teachers about your strengths and which subjects you are best at and enjoy most.
- Thinking about any difficulties you are having in school so that you can talk about these at the meeting.

- Asking for additional meetings if you feel you need them.

As well as careers advisers, teachers and (if you have one), your QTVI, your parents or carers will also be invited to attend the meeting. Some schools may invite a social worker, rehab/mobility officer and educational psychologist. If you feel shy or nervous about raising things at the meeting it is a good idea to talk through any issues with your parents/carers or a member of staff beforehand so that they can help you put your ideas across at the meeting. You may also be able to have an Advocacy Worker who will help you plan before and support you during meetings.

Young person talking about being assigned an Advocacy Worker to help her prepare for review meetings:

"I was about 14...she was basically there to advocate for me, so I worked with her a lot, I went to see her a few times before every annual or interim review. We made like a mind map of things I was concerned about, things I wanted to discuss, or things I wanted brought up, things that I wanted to say or have said. We worked on things that I thought were important to me, and where I wanted to see myself in 5 years. She was there, she could have either supported me to express views myself if I wanted to, or she was able to speak on my behalf if wanted to as well."



A report will be written after the meeting which summarises everything you talk about. Your parents will be sent a copy and you can read through it to check that you are happy with it. If you think anything has been missed out, talk to a member of staff about it. This report is for you to refer to in the future. Remember it's your plan, so it's important that it reflects your aspirations for the future.

Many young people with vision impairment find that it is helpful to talk to others who have been or are going through the same experiences as them to share stories and to learn from one another. Consequently, many local authorities and voluntary organisations put on focused transition events, and in particular ones to help you start to make decisions about what you want to do in the future. There is further information on different organisations in Section 11.

If you stay on at school, things will pretty much remain the same. You'll

continue to get support from your school and the support staff you are familiar with, although you will be expected to take on more responsibility for your learning. If you decide to leave school, there will be some changes for you to navigate. These are explored in the next sections.

Find out more about the support available through Skills Development Scotland at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentScotland.co.uk/>

Find out more about the support you are entitled to after age 16 at: <http://enquire.org.uk/3175/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/education-and-additional-support-after-16.pdf>

Once you are aged 16-19, you may be eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Further information is given in Section 10.

Section 3

Moving on to college or vocational training

The support that you can get varies between colleges and so it's really important that you visit before you apply. Even if you're not sure that you definitely want to go, it's a good idea to arrange a visit because it may help you make up your mind.

You should still get support but it will be provided by the support staff at the college. You won't see your QTVI any longer and you will be taught by a new team of staff at the college or organisation. Once in college you will also be expected to take more responsibility for your learning and the support that you receive, so it is important to be prepared.

If you are thinking of going to college, visit RNIB's young people's pages at www.rnib.org.uk/startingcollege to find out about choosing a college, study advice and more! You can also read about other young people's experiences of college life.

You can find detailed guidance from the Scottish Government about the support available at college for people with additional support needs at <https://www.gov.scot/resource/0039/00398746.pdf>

If you are in college and studying for a HNC or HND you may be able to access support through Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). More information is provided about DSA in Section 6.

Finding the right college

There are lots of ways to find out about a college. Gathering information from lots of sources will help you to get a good picture of the support they offer before you think of applying. You can:

- Check out their website – every college has one.
- Talk to other people who have been there and ask how they got on.
- Make contact with the student services team or the disability adviser at the college well before you apply to check out what specialist support is available.
- Visit the colleges you are considering as soon as possible. You'll be able to meet the support staff there and ask questions, for example about what assistive technology they have got and whether they have supported someone with vision impairment before and what adjustments they would propose making.

What about residential or specialist colleges?

Some local colleges may not have the support services you need. If you aren't happy that the local college can support you then you may want to consider applying to a residential or specialist college. As these colleges are located in England, this is a less commonly pursued option by students from Scotland.

You need to start planning for this as soon as you can. By S4 you and your parents should begin to:

- investigate residential or specialist colleges
- research possible courses and the support that would be available
- arrange to visit the colleges
- consider which college may best meet your needs.

If you're thinking about going to a residential or specialist college it is really important that this is discussed in your transition meeting and with a careers adviser.

Young people identify advantages and disadvantages of residential school and college as illustrated by the experiences of these two young people:

"I spent 5 years at [residential school]. Although the experience is useful for many young people I felt that my education would be no different there or in mainstream school. I missed the friends I had at home and wanted to be integrated"

"I think one of the main goals in [residential school] is to teach you independence and to teach you, not exactly reality, but teach you what life is like when you're a visually impaired adult. So I am quite happy I ended up going to that college, it did teach me a lot, I can do most of the things on my own now which I probably didn't before I went there."

Assessment of your needs at college

When applying for college, it is your responsibility to disclose your vision impairment/disability in the course application form. This should lead to you being invited to attend a learning support assessment. At this assessment you will have an opportunity to let the advisor know more about your support needs. If you have an advocacy/support worker, you may find it helpful for them to attend this assessment with you.

Although the type of support and who provides it may be different to school, this could still involve providing equipment such as assistive technology or human support such as a notetaker or mobility training.

Remember that your course and the college environment will be different from school, and sometimes the support you need will also be different. Some examples of support are:

- mobility training so you can navigate your way independently around the college
- a support teacher or worker, or a sighted guide
- materials in alternative formats such as braille or large print
- assistive computer technology, for example closed-circuit television, and training in how to use it
- computers with speech synthesisers and magnification.

The type of support that you can access, and the available funding for this, will be dependent upon a range of factors, including the nature of the course, your individual needs and qualification you are studying for.

Young person making the transition into college:

“I had an interview with the course tutor and that was going through things like what my [exam] grades were and stuff, so then I spoke to learning support and they spoke to me about how they could produce a book for me, and how I would access a lab and stuff. Each week I get two hours of subject specific support...what she does is give me support with stuff which is specifically related to the subject, like I need help with say diagrams or stuff, because she's got the subject specific knowledge”.

Supported learning at college

Some colleges offer supported programmes, which are aimed at students with additional support needs. These courses can help you develop specific skills to help you move onto further study or onto employment. You can find out more information about the courses which are offered by a college by looking on their website. If you are interested in finding a supported programme, you should mention this at transition meetings so that you get support in finding suitable opportunities in your area.



Section 4

Working while you study

Some courses offer you the opportunity to work and gain qualifications at the same time. These options are worth considering, especially if you prefer to study a practical course rather than an academic one.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is a great way to learn on the job alongside experienced people while studying for a nationally recognised qualification. It means you get the opportunity to do a real job, in a real workplace, and earn money at the same time. You can do an apprenticeship in many different areas ranging from accountancy to textiles, engineering to veterinary nursing, business administration to construction. Apprenticeships are available at different levels:

- Foundation Apprenticeships
- Modern Apprenticeships
- Graduate Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are very popular and sometimes employers, colleges or training providers ask for qualifications. Providers must give equal access for disabled people.

Young person talking about their decision to go on to an apprenticeship:

"There were a good few months where I didn't fully know what I wanted to do. College was all well and done, but I don't think I was getting all that I could out of it. I am definitely sure that I made the right decision to get my apprenticeship. I just think university, I don't think, was too right for me. Maybe one day I will go."

You may be entitled to receive Access to Work support to help you when you are on the job. See the section "Moving into work" for more information on Access to Work. If you are interested in doing an apprenticeship you should speak to a careers adviser.

For more information on apprenticeships:

visit the Skills Development Scotland website: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/apprenticeships/>
visit the Apprenticeships Scotland website: <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/>

Inclusion Scotland

Inclusion Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government to develop internships opportunities for people with disabilities in Scotland. The objective of these internships are to allow for disabled people to access paid work experience. More information can be found on this scheme at: <http://inclusionScotland.org/what-we-do/employability-and-civic-participation/employability/internships/>

Employability Skills

Skills Development Scotland offer a number of schemes to support the individuals developing employability skills. More information is available at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentScotland.co.uk/what-we-do/employability-skills/>



Section 5

Work experience and Volunteering

Work experience and volunteering are both great ways to find out about the different types of work you might be interested in doing. They also give you something to put on your CV to demonstrate that you have interests and have been reliable and hard working in your placements.

Work experience

Work experience is a crucial part of moving on and allows you to have hands-on experience of what it's like to work in different environments. It isn't just something you do towards the end of your time at school; it's something that you should look to do again when you are in college or university or potentially when looking for employment. Work experience is a great way of showing motivation

and initiative on your CV and will help you decide if you would like to go into a particular area of work, including helping you realise areas of work that you don't want to go into. It may form part of a course you do at university and can sometimes even lead to the offer of a job. It's really important to see work experience as something that you do not only do in school, but after you leave as well.

Your school may have a work experience coordinator to support you in finding potential placements for work experience. It's important that you make use of available support. Arranging the placement will be your responsibility, but you may want to ask your parents/carers to help you.

If you are seeking employment and are connected to a Job Centre, this is something you may want to discuss further with your advisor.



Young person talking about his work experience placement:

“Very helpful, because it’s the first time I had been into work. The fact that I had never had a suit on before... well not a suit, a shirt and tie. Just feeling like an adult really, so it’s a big step up.”

Volunteering

Volunteering can add a great deal to your life and the lives of others. It offers you the chance to become involved with something you really care about as well as an opportunity to meet new and like-minded people. It also enables you to try out something new and can be useful in terms of determining whether you’d like a career in a certain area. Skills and experience gained from volunteering are another way to show potential employers what you can offer and can sometimes lead to the offer of a job.

Government advice on volunteering can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/volunteer>

Volunteer Scotland offer guidance and links to volunteering opportunities: <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/>

There are lots of volunteering opportunities, including many with RNIB Scotland. To find out more please phone the RNIB Helpline at 0303 123 9999

Assistive Technology

If you are likely to need assistive technology to be able to undertake work experience or voluntary work, it is important to consider in advance the type of equipment you might need, and how you might access this, and learn to use it efficiently and effectively. While specialist equipment for the workplace can be funded by the government scheme ‘Access to Work’, this does not apply to work experience or voluntary positions, and therefore you will need to consider alternative ways of accessing technology.

One solution could be to use your own technology, for example by using your own laptop and any assistive technology you usually use. You could also consider using inbuilt accessibility options, such as the magnification tools which are built into the operating systems of Mac and Windows computers. If you need to use a screen reader, you could consider using NVDA, which is a free screen reader. You can find more information about this at: <https://www.nvaccess.org/>

Finding Volunteering and Work Experience opportunities

There are several ways in which you could identify volunteering and work experience opportunities. Some organisations offer unpaid internship which you may need to apply for as part of a competitive process. This is particularly true for competitive industries like media who often advertise positions online. Another option to consider is approaching organisations directly to ask whether

they have any opportunities available by sending them a copy of your CV and a covering letter and explaining why you would like to work at their organisation. Finally consider using your existing networks such as family members or friends to find a suitable placement. The best approach will likely depend on the type of organisation you are seeking to work with, so you may need to conduct some research first or get advice from others.



Young person talking about voluntary work:

"I chose to search for voluntary work upon graduating from university a couple of years ago. I did this as I felt it would boost my CV, teach me to be more independent and provide some much needed work experience whilst looking for employment.

There were services available to help me find voluntary positions which I was advised on at my job centre, however I found searching for myself to be more beneficial. Choosing locations I felt comfortable travelling to, I went into places that took volunteers and inquired after work. This worked well for me because I could get a general idea for the place and see if it was suitable for me and it made people who I could be working with aware of my abilities despite my vision impairment.

When I was called into the places I would be volunteering at, I was first given brief inductions, these were the best times to disclose what requirements would need to be met for me to work in the locations. We discussed the layout of the workplace, what jobs might be required of me and health and safety. We couldn't be sure initially of all the requirements I would need, as voluntary positions can incorporate different types of work in the same place, so we agreed that I'd usually have a person (either a member of staff, or a more experienced volunteer) available for me to talk to should I require more assistance. If I did find that reasonable adjustments were not being made, I'd use quieter times to discuss the issue with a member of staff to see if we could figure out any more adjustments that could be made.

I have gained many benefits from my voluntary work. My confidence has been greatly improved and I feel more secure in my abilities in a working environment. My communication skills (especially in discussing my needs) have greatly improved which I can use in employment. Most importantly for me, I am more independent. I used to be quite anxious about the issues my vision impairment would cause whereas now I am more aware of when and what issues may occur and how to best resolve them."

Gap years

You may wish to take an extended period of time away from education or before pursuing your chosen career. Many young people take 'gap years' during which they may, for example, travel and work abroad, or save up to earn money before going to university. Taking a gap year can be a helpful time, particularly if you are unsure about what you want to do next.

Several of the young people in the longitudinal transition study took gap years to do extended periods of voluntary work, including working abroad and had very positive experiences:

"...had a fantastic, fantastic gap year. I had three jobs at the end of it practically. Non-paid, all voluntary and all music related and enjoyable, and it was the best decision I ever made"

If you are interested in taking a gap year you may find <http://www.independentgapadvice.org/> helpful. The website provides general advice for taking a gap year, as well as providing specific advice and case studies of gap years for people with disabilities.



Section 6

Moving on to university

Once you have finished S5 or S6 you may be considering applying to university. This is a really exciting time and may even involve moving away from home and living alone for the first time. Again, it's really important to plan well in advance so start thinking about this as soon as you can. It's important to think ahead to make sure that you choose the right course at the right university and, most importantly, that everything is in place and ready for your first day. This means you can start your course without having to worry about any issues to do with your equipment and support needs and concentrate on making friends and settling in.

For detailed guidance on moving on to university, check out our step by step guide. This will take you through the steps of choosing and applying for a course, arranging your support and making the transition to university: www.rnib.org.uk/startinguniversity

Young person talking about university:

"It's really fun, honestly. I have joined the ice skating society and that's fun, then I have friends I go out and stuff, that side of uni is fine, that's pretty perfect."

At university, the responsibility is on you to make sure that you are receiving the help you need. However, all universities have a disability or learning support team. This team can help with any issues and it's a good idea to meet with them before you begin your course. They will be able to talk about the support available and can help you with applying for Disabled Students' Allowance. It is important to be aware that disability or learning support teams will be looking for you to take more responsibility for your support needs than you may have taken in school or college, as illustrated in the quote from one university staff member:

Lecturer at a university talking about their expectations of students with disabilities:

"I think you have got to be aware that they are now 18, and they are coming to university, they are independent adults, we are going to treat them as an adult, and that works both ways, in that they have to let us know if things aren't right. And we will try and, you know, we will talk to them about that, try and change things if things are wrong, or work things out"

But remember that university is about more than your course – the social aspects are very important too. Try to get involved at Freshers' Week and think about joining clubs and societies where you can meet people and make friends. Again, if there are any problems, just get in touch with the disability or learning support team at your university.

Young person talking about social opportunities at university:

"Social wise I have joined a few new clubs and societies and I have got a buddy, they have set up a new scheme, like a peer mentoring system, so I have got a buddy to come with me to one of the societies, because it's like a volunteering society, so I have got a buddy coming there to support me when I am volunteering".

Choosing a university

It is important that you choose a university that has the course you really want to do and that has support services in place to help you to succeed in it. It may help to:

- Discuss course options with your careers adviser, subject tutors, support staff and parents.
- Look at the UCAS website (www.ucas.ac.uk) for information on courses, institutions and entry requirements.
- Look at the university's website.
- Contact the disability adviser at the university to find out what support they can offer.
- Arrange a visit. There will be open days advertised on the website although you may want to contact the disability support service directly as you might be able to go and meet them at the same time. This is useful as you can meet the staff in advance and ask questions about the types of support you'll be able to access.
- UCAS offer guidance to help you consider what subject, course type and course provider would suit you best. You can find this at: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/ucas-undergraduate-what-study>

One young person explains what he considered before going to university:

“[they] had a good disability department, one of the best that I have seen, from my experience so far it’s been absolutely brilliant... they really do seem to know what they are doing, so that’s good. And I had a friend who is also vision impaired who came up here and had a really positive time with the disability department and the course. Also I like the course structure that you have to pick three courses in your first two years, I think that’s quite good, because it means that you can chop and change and switch.”

Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA)

The DSA provides funding that can be put towards the extra course costs you may face as a direct result of your vision impairment and/or other disabilities. It enables you to study and have access to course materials on an equal basis to other students. As part of the process you will be assessed for the type of extra support that you need and the funding will be allocated to cover it.

What type of things can my DSA pay for?

Up to date information about the DSA, how much funding is available to you and what you can use it for can be found at: http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/dsa.htm

Your DSA could pay for:

- Specialist equipment – for example a computer, a screen reader, magnification software, braille notetaker.

- Non-medical help – for example readers or other non-medical assistants you need to benefit fully from your course.
- Travel costs related to your course

One young person discovered during the DSA process that there was a lot of new technology he had previously been unaware of:

“There’s a lot of things that I wasn’t aware of at the time. I was very surprised with what they can actually provide, and the detail they actually go into, I had no idea there was a software programme that can read out stuff to you, if you highlighted things. I was very surprised with what was there really.”

How do I apply for a DSA?

You will need to download and fill in a form to apply for a DSA (http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/dsa.htm). There are two different forms to choose from, depending on whether you also wish to apply for additional funds such as living costs or not.

You should apply as soon as possible and not wait until you’ve been accepted on a course.

The DSA assessment

If you qualify for a DSA, you’ll be asked to attend an “assessment centre” to work out what support and equipment you might need. At this assessment, the assessor will ask you questions about the type of support which you have received previously, and the nature of your vision impairment. The assessor should take into account:

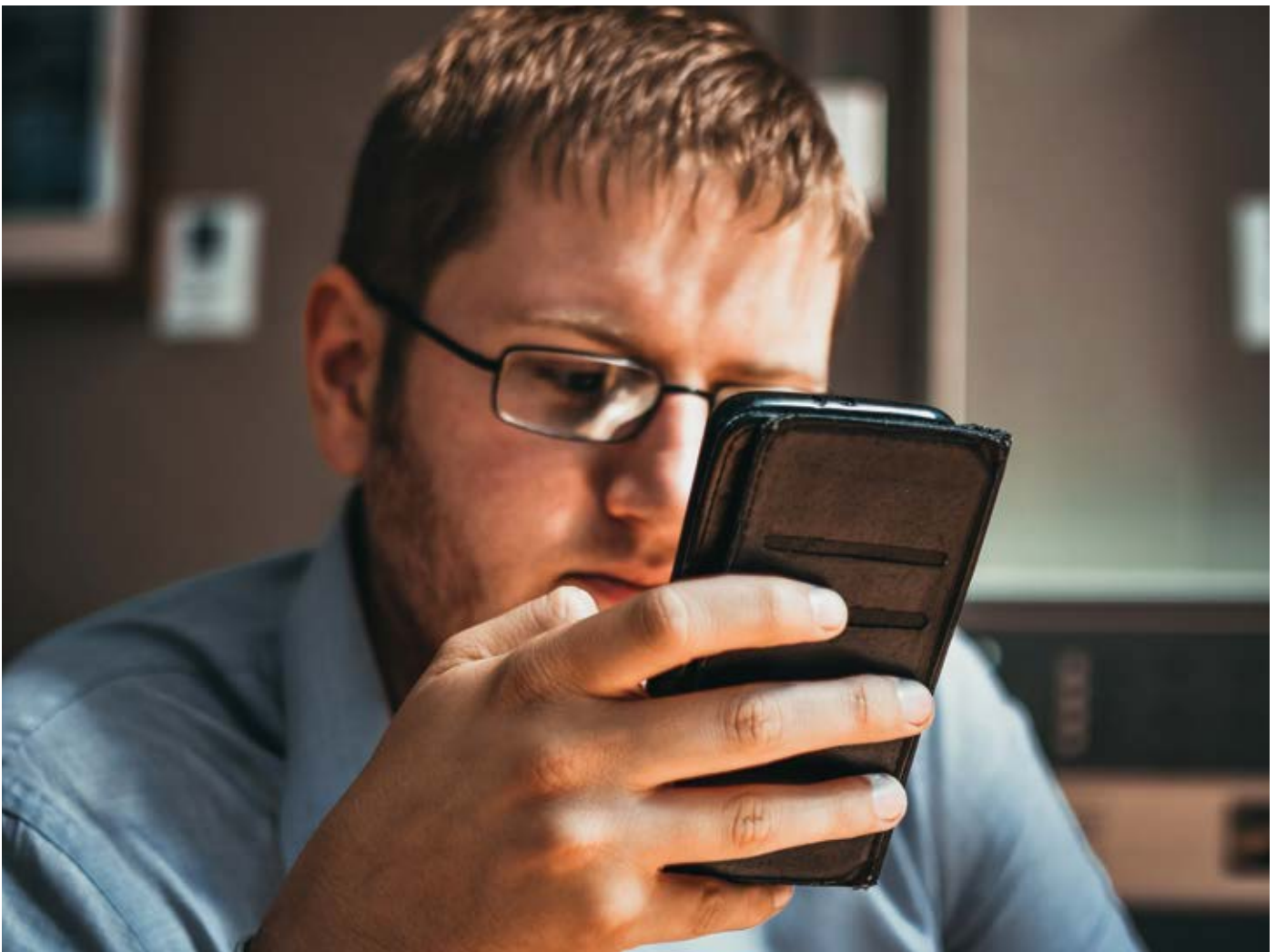
- the prognosis of your sight condition
- the demands of the course over the coming years.

You can choose your own DSA assessment centre. A list of Scottish centres is available at: http://www.saas.gov.uk/_forms/needs_assessment.pdf. You may decide to choose a centre which is close to where you live, or your university may recommend a centre which they are used to working with. RNIB also operate DSA Assessment Centres in London and Surrey: <https://www.rnib.org.uk/disabled-students-allowances-assessments>. Some students find it beneficial to meet an assessor with a specialist knowledge of vision impairment, while others prefer to use assessors recommended by their institution.

It is really important to consider in advance of your assessment the type of support that you may need once at university. There is more guidance about this on our Starting University pages.

On reflecting on their DSA assessment, one young person said:

"I think it was really, really good. It was literally asking questions about everything, and I found that everything was tailored to what I needed, there wasn't anything that I am not really happy about, because everything I needed was taken into account and it really, really helped."



Section 7

Moving on to work

If you are thinking of starting work, visit the RNIB young people's pages at www.rnib.org.uk/startingwork

From choosing a career and interview tips to writing a CV and deciding how you'll approach discussing your sight condition with potential employers, there is lots of useful information for you. You can also read about other young people's experiences of starting work.

When you are ready to look for work, check out the looking for work section of the RNIB website: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-work-and-employment/looking-work>

My World of Work offers guidance to help you think about what type of career you might like, including helping you think about your strengths and what you enjoy and where your subject choices might take you <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland staff can assist individuals with additional support needs to:

- assess their own interests, skills and strengths
- understand the range of options open to them
- develop realistic and achievable career plans
- develop CVs
- develop job seeking skills
- make applications for college and university courses
- apply for current job or training vacancies
- link with other helpful organisations and agencies.

For further information and help, you can call in to your local Skills Development Scotland Careers Centre or visit their website: www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk

Job Centre

Your local Jobcentre will be able to help you look for work in your area. They advertise job opportunities online and also in the Jobcentre itself. If you need extra employment support because of your sight loss, the Jobcentre will talk to you about identifying opportunities to find work or gain new skills, even if you have been out of work for a long time, or if you have little or no work experience.

Things to tell your potential employer

Talking positively about your sight condition

When you are applying for jobs you need to think about if and when you plan to tell your employer about your sight condition. There aren't any rules about this and you don't have to tell an employer if you don't want to. It is up to you to decide at what point in applying for a job you choose to discuss it.

One young person described why it's important to be prepared in advance for disclosing your vision impairment:

"I am confident to talk about it, and I know how to talk about it in a way that advocates, not like 'I need help 24-7, help me!' I know how to explain what I need, but not come across in a bad way"

There are lots of benefits to talking to your employer about your sight condition. It means that you have the opportunity to approach the issue in a positive way and allows you to reassure the employer that your sight condition does not mean that you are unable to do the job properly by talking about the adjustments you will make. If you do decide that you want to talk about your sight condition to a potential employer you can design your own disclosure strategy. This means you plan exactly how and when you want to discuss this and you should think about this before going to job interviews.

There are many more reasons why talking to your employer about your sight condition may be a good idea. It is only when you disclose your disability that you have rights under the Equality Act 2010 and that you become entitled to 'reasonable adjustments' in the workplace. Reasonable adjustments could include:

- providing you with a larger monitor
- ensuring that the lighting in your working environment is appropriate
- ensuring that written material is made available in a format that you can access using your assistive technology
- accommodating your Guide Dog.

The Access to Work scheme

When you are looking for work it's really important that you know about the Access to Work scheme. It's a Government programme that can pay for things like:

- taxis to and from work – really useful where transport links are poor
- screen reader or magnification software for your work computer
- a support worker to help read and deal with paperwork
- a driver where public transport is not available for travel to, from and for work
- other equipment such as special lighting and magnifiers.

The support that you'll get will depend on the job you are doing and your needs. You'll be assessed by an Access

to Work Assessor who will discuss the support you are likely to need and look at the requirements of your job. But be prepared for the Access to Work process to only begin near or maybe even after your start date.

Young people can also receive Access to Work funding when participating in work experience placements such as supported internships, traineeships and apprenticeships.

Employers often worry about the potential costs of employing a person with a sight condition because they think the equipment and support needed may be expensive. Many employers don't know about the Access to Work scheme, so it's a good idea to find out as much as you can about it yourself.

For more information about the Access to Work Scheme visit www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Interview skills: top tips

Interviews can be really stressful – but you can help yourself as much as possible by preparing beforehand:

- Arrange any adjustments you may need in advance. For example, if you have to complete a test you may need a large print version.
- Plan your journey, and know what transport links you need to catch to get you there a little early. You're unlikely to get the job if you are late!
- Make sure you know about the Access to Work Scheme, which provides you with practical support to do your job.
- Dress appropriately.
- Be confident and practise good posture.
- Research the organisation and content of the job.
- Re read your application form.
- Research and think about who is interviewing you.
- Use the job description and person specification to think about what questions you might be asked, and plan your responses using your past experiences as examples.
- Think about how you talk about your sight loss (your disclosure strategy).
- Prepare some questions to ask at the end of the interview.

Section 8

Preparing for Independence

Imagine you have just got your place at college or university – or that new job that you really wanted. You may be about to live alone for the first time in your life. Preparing for this ahead of time – learning how to cook basic meals, handle the laundry and shop independently – is really important, especially if you have relied on others to do these for you in the past.

Adjusting the way you work

Part of the role of specialist services, and education in general, is to prepare you to become an independent adult. This is also true for other students as the education system is structured to allow young people to become more independent over time.

It is important as you get older to be prepared to adapt the way in which you work to allow you to become more independent and to be able to adjust to the different settings you move into. For example, in your early years in school your teachers may provide you with materials which are in your preferred reading format. However over time they may instead focus their attention on teaching you ways in which to adapt learning material yourself, for example, by using assistive technology.

Young person talking about the technology they use:

"I developed an understanding of what technology works best for me. I am using different technology to what I used when

I transitioned from [secondary school], and that's good, not because the technology that I used when I transitioned was bad...I have got it down to a fine art of what I need to use when, and what software works best and what kind of PC I want, you know I am investing in new technology just to experiment with myself and see if that can help me"

It is also important to be prepared to take responsibility for your own support needs and to challenge when reasonable adjustments are not being met. This may be daunting at first which is why it can be beneficial to start doing this when in a familiar environment like school.

Using Low Vision Aids

For some young people with vision impairment, magnifiers and other low vision aids can boost your independence by enabling you to read print you wouldn't be able to read otherwise. They can be really useful for:

- reading ingredients, sell by dates and cooking instructions
- reading information on medicine bottles
- looking at the dials on the microwave, cooker and washing machine

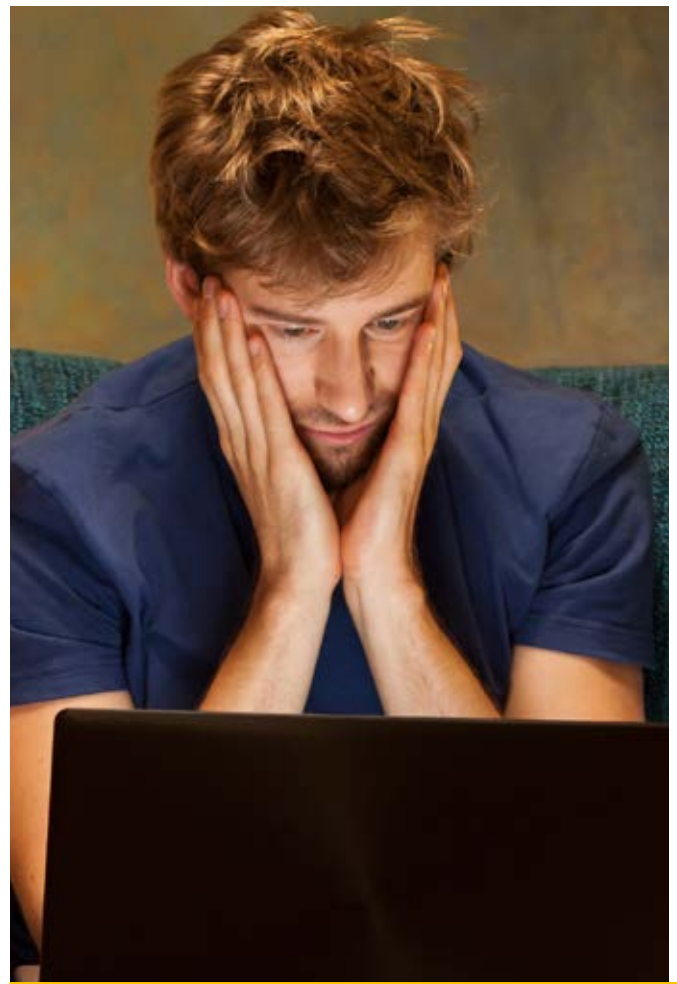
Before you make a transition you should look into having an assessment with an optometrist to talk through your lifestyle changes. Low vision aids may be useful, for example, for reading course materials at university. Let's say, for example, that your lecture

notes haven't been enlarged in time. A low vision aid could enable you to follow the session along with the other students. In fact, students often prefer to use technology such as computers and low vision aids compared to large print materials as it means they can be more independent.

Young person talking about using low vision aids:

"At primary school I found it a bit embarrassing because I wasn't the same as everyone else, and I had to use the big magnifiers to see everything, it was a bit embarrassing then, but as I got older, I just got used to it, I know I need them. At school I would try not to use them, I was struggling then, and I'd make myself struggle just so I didn't have to use the magnifying glass or whatever I needed to use, but now I just don't bother struggling, I know that I need it, I am just hurting myself if I don't use them. It's better for me if I do use them, use the magnifying glasses and things, whatever I need, I use it." Low vision services

Low vision services can help you make the most of your sight. Specialist low vision practitioners can assess your vision and provide support, advice and practical solutions for you. It is important to have a thorough low vision assessment before buying any magnifiers. A good low vision service will have a wide range of equipment including hand held magnifiers in a variety of shapes and handles (including those with in-built illumination) and stand magnifiers. They can also establish which low vision aids would be most useful for you. These may include other aids, such as large buttoned telephones, talking watches, and liquid level indicators to help increase your independence in your home.



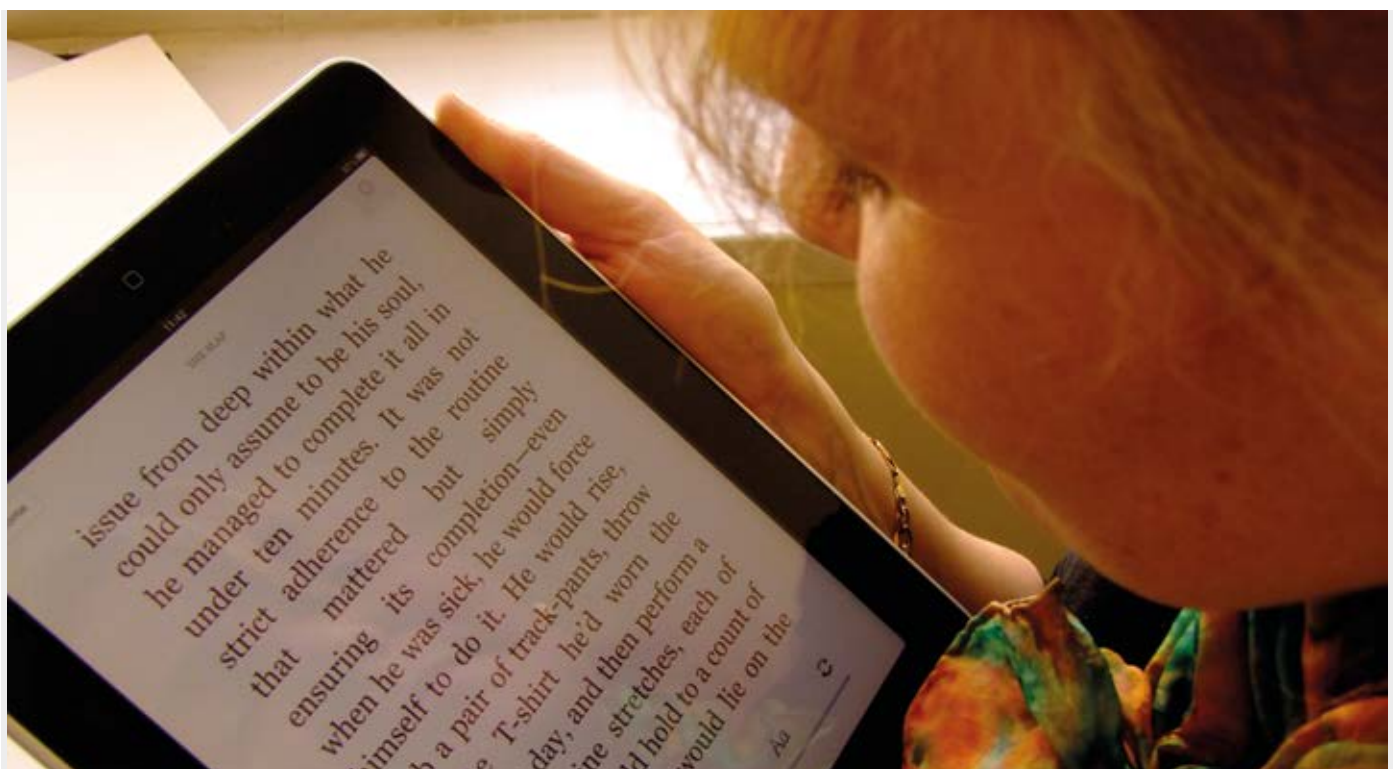
Finding your local low vision service

Low vision service provision across the UK is very variable and may be based in a local hospital, located in opticians' practices or offered from a resource centre run by the local society for people with sight loss. To find out more about low vision services in your area, contact a local hospital eye department or speak to your GP, social services (the vision, sensory impairment team) or local society for people with sight loss. If you no longer see an eye specialist it may be useful to visit your local optometrist who can carry out an eye health check as well as help signpost you to local services.

For further information on low vision, download our guide "Starting Out: Making the most of your sight" at: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/recently-diagnosed/take-action-and-next-steps>

Using Assistive technology

Assistive technology such as magnification software and screen-readers may prove more important to you once in new settings. For example, many of the young people on the longitudinal transitions study found that once they got to university there was a lot more reading required than they were previously used to. They found that while they had not benefited from assistive technology in the past, once at university it was helpful to reduce fatigue. So, learning to use assistive technology efficiently and effectively is very important for preparing for your future.



Young person talking about assistive technology:

"It's definitely very important, because nowadays everyone uses...even now you are using a computer. You know everyone emails, reports whatever, everything is more technology now."

You may not know much about the wide range of technology that's on the market and, with technology advancing constantly, it can be hard to keep up. It might be a good idea to contact someone who can come and visit you to show you the latest products on the market. This is something which could be arranged by your DSA or Access to Work assessor. You may want to check out organisations and services such as RNIB employment service, Ability Net (www.abilitynet.org.uk) and Blind in Business (www.blindinbusiness.co.uk), which offer advice to vision impaired students moving into education or work including assessments, equipment supply, ICT training and employment services. You may also wish to visit an event like Sight Village where you will have the opportunity to explore the latest technology (<http://www.qac.ac.uk/exhibitions.htm>).

Young person talking about visiting Sight Village exhibition:

"I was very lucky, I went to Sight Village about two weeks before my DSA assessment, so obviously I was walking around, and they had all the equipment, and I was like 'ahh, that looks like it could be useful' and whatever."

RNIB has information on the latest technology at www.rnib.org.uk/technology.

Using Braille

Many of the young people interviewed as part of the longitudinal transitions study found that they had moved away from the use of braille towards the end of their time in school. However once in new settings such as college and university they found that braille was extremely beneficial for certain tasks. Areas particularly highlighted included when revising for exams, when delivering presentations and when following notes during lectures.

Young person talking about using braille:

"If I need to remember things I would probably use braille, because if a screen reader reads it I am like 'what... I won't remember that!' Having it literally written in front of me that's how I remember things. That's how I did my revision for exams."

Many young people enjoy using electronic refreshable braille devices, which allow the user to read electronic material in braille (and in the case of some devices, also take notes). You can find out more about these devices at www.rnib.org.uk/technology.

Speaking out

During your time in school you will likely have had people advocating on your behalf. For example this may have included specialist teachers advising your school on how best to support you in lessons or your parents/carers intervening if something was not going well. Once in settings like college, university and employment the expectation will be on you to advocate for yourself. For example,

you may need to explain the adjustments you need, you may need to explain how your vision impairment affects you, or you may need to challenge others when reasonable adjustments are not met. The young people we spoke to as part of the longitudinal study identified several ways in which they felt better prepared to do this. These included: having had opportunities to self-advocate when younger (for example explaining what they needed in school or college); having a good understanding of their vision impairment and how it affects them; and having a good knowledge and understanding of available specialist equipment and support.



Young person talking about self-advocating:

"I think I am confident about it because you know, it's 20 years of experience. I had to learn my own way and had to learn it myself, but I know what I need and I know what I don't need, so I am happy. I am not stressed about it or nervous. I will just say this is what I need and this is what I don't need, but I had to learn it myself, I had to figure it out myself, how to approach people about it in the first place."

Getting around on your own

Often young people with vision impairment are taught and learn to confidently get around independently in an area which is familiar to them. This is a very important skill which should be developed as much as possible at school. Even with these skills young people find that it is more challenging getting around independently once they move into a new area. If you are going into further education or higher education it may be advisable for you to request mobility support to help you familiarise yourself with your new setting. If you are moving to an entirely new area you may also wish to ask for mobility support from the Local Authority to help you get around independently in your new home. If you do request support, do this as far in advance as possible. If you are going to be using the train you may benefit from using the free rail assistance service.

One young person described how she is more confident travelling independently since using apps on her mobile phone:

"One of the most stressful things for me when I was younger was public transport and getting around and being able to see the timetables and all that kind of stuff. Whereas these days it's so much easier. I live in Manchester which is a big city but since I had a smart phone which could do maps and stuff which was in the first year, everything just completely changed."

Further guidance on travel and mobility, including details of the free rail assistance service and mobile apps, is available at: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/cy/information-everyday-living/getting-around>

Living independently

As you move into new settings such as higher education and employment you may also start living on your own for the first time.

Thomas Pocklington Trust have published a guide on specific advice for people with vision impairment who are looking for a home: <http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/guide-finding-home-visually-impaired-people1/> This advice is helpfully tailored for specific personal circumstances.

RNIB have advice designed for young people with vision impairment who are preparing to live on their own for the first time: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people/leaving-home>

One young person explained how they were going to use their time living at home to prepare for eventually living independently:

"I hope to in the end, after university, I will get a place of my own. Until then I am still hoping to learn independence skills, in between now and then. Particularly this year...Things like cooking, probably the main one."



Section 9

Know your rights

Every child in Scotland has the right to an “adequate and efficient school curriculum that aims to develop their “personality, talents and mental and physical abilities...to their fullest potential”. Under Scottish law, every child has the right to additional support if they are unable to benefit fully from school education without it (for further information, read this Enquire factsheet). The Equality Act (2010) protects you against discrimination by providing legal rights in the following areas:

- employment
- education
- access to goods, services and facilities
- buying and renting land or property.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended 2009) places duties on local authorities to identify, meet and monitor the needs of children and young people. Specific responsibilities for students with Additional Support Needs are documented in the Supporting Children’s Learning Code of Practice. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/04/04090720/0>

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against disabled people. This includes education providers (schools, colleges and universities) and employers, which means it is against the law for them to discriminate against learners and employees because they have a disability. A disability is referred to in the Act as a “protected characteristic”. Your school, college, university or employer must ensure you are not disadvantaged because of your vision impairment.

Equality Act in education

Under the Equality Act all education providers are required to ensure that disabled people’s access requirements are met. Schools, colleges and universities are required to provide publicity and all other materials in a range of accessible formats (large print, Braille, etc.) so you should ask for these in the format you prefer. They have an ‘anticipatory’ duty under the law and they should be able to provide materials in an appropriate format without difficulty. The environment should also be accessible and you should be able to get around safely.

To find out more about the Equality Act 2010 in education, visit: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-education-and-learning-adult-learning/your-rights-education>

Equality Act in employment

An employer must not discriminate at any point during their recruitment process. This includes how applications are dealt with, who is invited for interviews and how they make their decision for offering someone a job. It can also be discrimination if an employer advertises a position in such a way as to exclude or discourage disabled people from applying and does not refer to a consideration of any reasonable adjustments.

The Equality Act says that employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to support their employees with disabilities to carry out their jobs. The reasonable adjustments required will depend on the individual's needs and the type of job they do, for example, providing documents in alternative formats. A failure to make these reasonable adjustments could amount to discrimination.

To find out more about the Equality Act 2010 in employment, visit: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-your-rights/equality-act-2010>

What to do if things go wrong

These guidance materials outline the type of support that should be available to you. However, research evidence demonstrates that this is not always the case. If you are not receiving the support that you require and this is having a negative effect on the transitions that you are making, it is important to challenge this. For further advice and guidance contact the RNIB helpline on **0303 123 9999** or **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

Section 10

Benefits and financial help

As you move through your journey from school and beyond you may be entitled to different benefits and financial assistance because of your sight condition. The financial help you'll be able to get will depend on what you are doing and your circumstances at the time: for example, at university you may be entitled to Disabled Students Allowance and at work you may be entitled to funding through the Access to Work scheme. You may also be entitled to benefits such as Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payments (PIP) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

The Government is replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people aged between 16 and 64 with a new benefit called Personal Independence Payment (PIP). You can find out more about the introduction of PIP and how this is likely to affect you if you are blind or partially sighted at www.rnib.org.uk/managingyourmoney. Disability Living Allowance currently applies for anyone under the age of 16 <https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children>.

Welfare benefits

Most full-time students can't claim welfare benefits. However, if you're registered blind or you get Personal Independence Payments (PIP), you may be able to apply for other benefits including Housing Benefit.

Housing Benefit can be paid towards the cost of living in halls provided by your university or college, as well as if you live in private rented accommodation. The amount you can claim depends on various factors, including the available income from student loans and maintenance grants (but not the Special Support Grant as this does not count as income).

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a benefit for people on low incomes. It will gradually replace many other welfare benefits – including housing benefit, income support and jobseeker's allowance.

Self-Directed Support

In 2014, an Act was passed in Scotland which gives individuals rights to make informed choices about the support they received through social care services and health and social care professionals. You can find more information about this at: <http://www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk/>.

Education Maintenance Allowances Scotland

Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) provide financial support to young people from low income families staying on at school beyond your legal leaving date. They also include part-time non-advanced college courses. The amount you receive is based on the amount of money coming in to your house and not everyone receives it. Further information is available at: <https://www.mygov.scot/ema/>

Young Scot

If you've grown up in Scotland, you have probably heard of Young Scot at school. The good news is that you can still get all the benefits of Young Scot right up until you are 26. Further information is available at www.youngscotextra.org

Further advice

For individual benefits advice it's best to speak with a welfare rights specialist in the student money advice team at your university or college, or try your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

You could also contact RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email helpline@rnib.org.uk and our Welfare Rights Advisers can help to resolve any problems you have in getting the right support.

You can also get advice from the Disability Rights UK on **0800 328 5050**, or visit: <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org>



Section 11

Useful contacts for more information and support

Blind in Business

Blind in Business is a charity working with blind and partially sighted young people to maximise educational and employment opportunities. It offers specialist workshops and training programmes and specific services to older pupils and graduates. Telephone **020 7588 1885**. www.blindinbusiness.org.uk

Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK offers a wide range of information and advice to ensure disabled students have specialist support in making decisions about their education, training and employment choices after leaving school. This includes online information for disabled students, families and professionals, factsheets for disabled students and advisers and a helpline/email advice service. Call the students helpline on **0800 328 5050**, email students@disabilityrightsuk.org or visit the website at www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/education-skills-and-employment

RNIB website

The RNIB website offers useful information for young people who are studying or looking for work. Use the website to get help with writing a CV, deciding how you'll approach discussing your sight loss with potential employers and to find out more about things like the Access to Work Scheme and to read other young people's experiences of transition. Visit our new Young People's section at www.rnib.org.uk/youngpeople.

RNIB Helpline

Your direct line to the support, advice and products you need. We'll help you to find out what's available in your area and beyond, both from RNIB and other organisations. Whether you want to know more about an eye condition, buy a product from our shop, join our library, find out about possible benefit entitlements, be put in touch with a trained counsellor, or make a general enquiry, we're only a call away. Telephone **0303 123 9999**. Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

RNIB Emotional Support Service (ESS)

Provides confidential support, information and counselling by telephone and online if you are experiencing emotional difficulties because of your sight condition. We can also put you in touch with counsellors and support in your local area. For more information, visit www.rnib.org.uk/emotionalsupport, call RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (and ask to be referred to the Emotional Support Service) or email ess@rnib.org.uk

Guide Dogs

Guide dogs offer a mobility and independence service for young people through critical transition stages such as school to further education and/or employment. Provision for those over 18 covers a wide spectrum of services in relation to orientation and mobility skills, independent living skills and communication skills. www.guidedogs.org.uk

Haggeye

Haggeye is RNIB Scotland's award-winning forum that gives young people with sight loss aged twelve to twenty five a voice. The forum provides a friendly and supportive platform which helps young people raise awareness of what it is like to be vision impaired.

www.facebook.com/haggeye

Linking Education and Disability (LEAD) Scotland

Linking Education and Disability Scotland provide advice and support to young people with disabilities as they continue in education after school.

<http://www.lead.org.uk/>

Thomas Pocklington Trust

Thomas Pocklington Trust advocates and provides support for people with vision impairment. They have a particular focus on supporting adults, and are growing their capacity regarding young people and offer a range of advice on topics such as housing and registration. <http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/>

Scottish Transitions Forum

The Scottish Transitions Forum has produced the Seven Principles of Good Transitions framework.

To download the framework visit www.scottishtransitions.org.uk or contact the forum by calling **0131 663 4444**.

Sense

Sense is a national charity which supports people who are deafblind, have sensory impairments or complex needs, to enjoy more independent lives <https://www.sense.org.uk/>.

Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland offer a range of services, including careers advice, support for developing employability skills and guidance around apprenticeships. They also run the 'Opportunities for All' telephone service which provides advice on post-school opportunities within your local area <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/> or phone **0800 917 8000**

VICTA

VICTA support children and young people who are blind or partially sighted and their families across the UK. They run many residential opportunities, including supported overseas adventure holidays <http://www.victa.org.uk/>.

Visual Impairment Network for Children and Young People (VINCYP)

The Network aims to improve the care for children and young people with a visual impairment. VINCYP involves professionals working in health, education and social work, parents/carers of children and young people with a visual impairment and voluntary sector organisations <https://www.vincyp.scot.nhs.uk/>

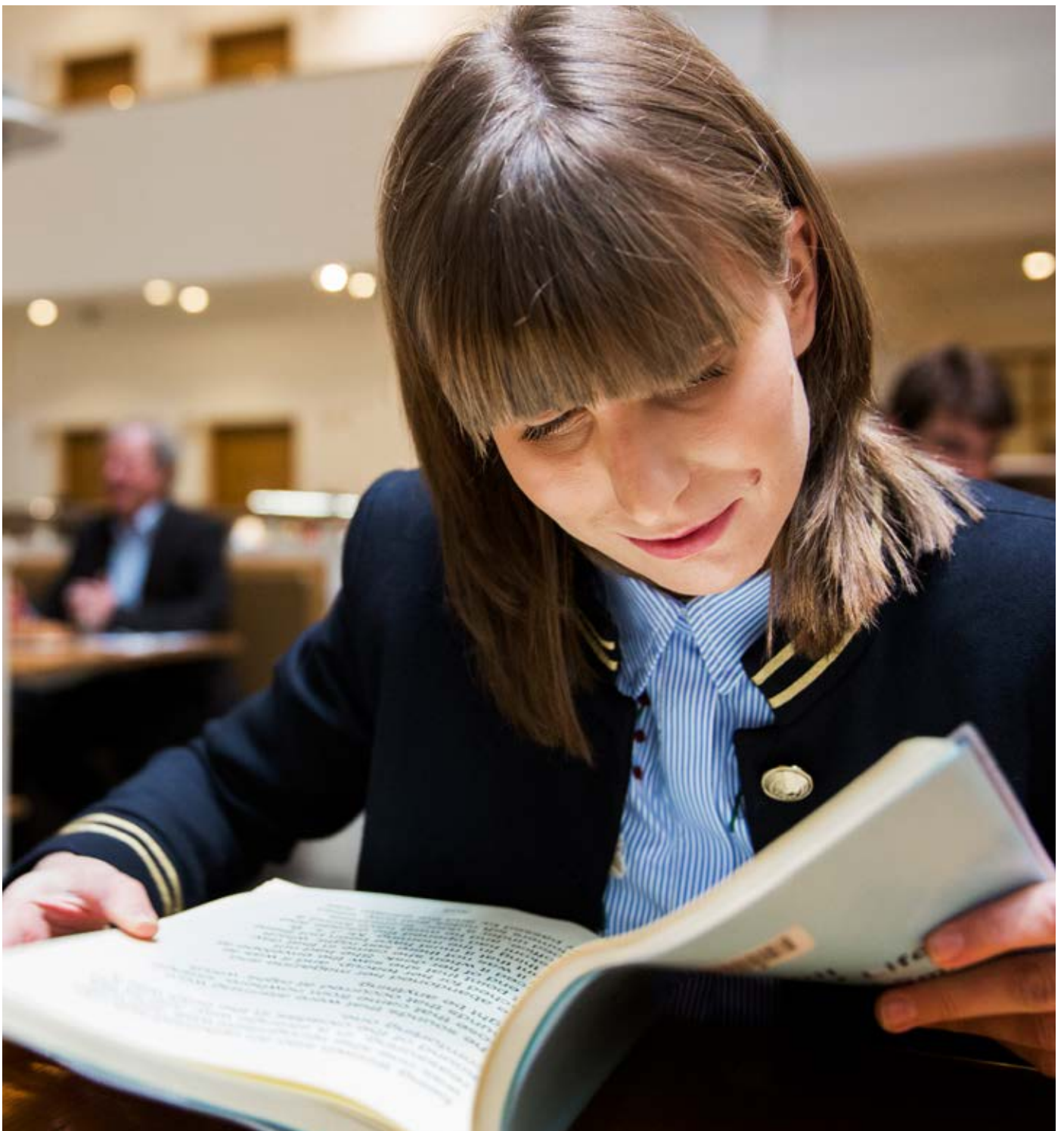
Other sight loss charities

There are many locally based sight loss charities or charities which focus on particular conditions.

Acknowledgements

The development of this guide has been supported through funding from the Big Lottery Fund and an ESRC-Impact Accelerator Award which provided funding for a collaborative project between RNIB and Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research. The resource draws upon findings

from the Longitudinal Transitions Study, a research project which is being run by researchers at VICTAR, University of Birmingham, funded by Thomas Pocklington Trust and was previously funded by RNIB and Nuffield Foundation.



RNIB

RNIB Helpline 0303 123 9999
helpline@rnib.org.uk

Follow us online:



facebook.com/rnibuk



twitter.com/RNIB



youtube.com/user/rnibuk

rnib.org.uk

© RNIB registered charity in England and Wales (226227), Scotland (SC039316), Isle of Man (1226). Also operating in Northern Ireland.

 RNIB working with



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

victar
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT CENTRE
FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH