

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

A guide for parents and carers – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Introduction

For the purposes of this document the following terms and abbreviations will be used:

CFVI or framework	Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment
CYP with VI	Children and Young People with Vision Impairment
Parent	Parent / carer / family
QTVI	Qualified Teacher of children and young people with Vision Impairment
RQHS	Registered Qualified Habilitation Specialist
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan

An overview of the CFVI

The CFVI is a UK wide document setting out the specialist skill development areas that children and young people with vision impairment (CYP with VI) may need during their education if they are to access their national or school curriculum efficiently and with the maximum degree of independence. The framework is clear that these skill areas need to be taught, or delivery overseen, by suitably specialist qualified staff, such as Qualified Teachers of Children and Young People

with Vision Impairment (QTVIs) and Registered Qualified Habilitation Specialists (RQHSs). The framework was produced through a robust consultation process with key partners across the VI sector and UK and was launched in March 2022 and now belongs to CYP, their families, and the professionals that work with them. There is no set way for the framework to be used, the intention is for everyone to use it in the way it works best for them. Yet it provides a common language and set of specialist areas for all to refer to.

The Parent Guide

The parent guide was written by parents for parents and contains ideas of how the CFVI can support families and professionals to work together in order to ensure the best and most appropriate support is available for each individual CYP.

During the development and launch of the CFVI Parent Guide some common questions were raised; this document records those for future reference.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How does the CFVI align with the standard curriculum delivered in schools?

The CFVI pulls together all the skills that CYP with VI may need at some point during their education. Those specialist skills are clearly identified as being necessary for the learner to access the curriculum the school is delivering alongside their peers, be that the National Curriculum, the Curriculum for Excellence, the Curriculum for Wales, the Northern Ireland Curriculum or the school's own curriculum in the case of a special school for example.

The CFVI reinforces the need for specialists to deliver teaching, other input and /or supervision in these skill areas. They include QTVIs, RQHSs, specialist TAs, any professional who we would class as having specialist knowledge of vision impairment.

Is the framework relevant for learners with complex needs?

The framework is there for all CYP with VI, 0 to 25, whether they're in mainstream, special school settings, specialist VI settings or home educated. It identifies the specialist areas that they may need access to during their education in order to become as independent as possible. However, independence can look very different for different children and for different families.

For example, area 3 on the framework is communication. For a child in mainstream early years the focus might be on speech, reading and writing. For a learner with additional disabilities, the focus might be on using switch systems, audio scanning or learning to use a new communication system. All of these would need specialist input which might include but not be limited to a QTVI, speech and language therapist etc.

All areas of the framework have the potential to be relevant for all CYP with VI, in all settings. It's a framework to support access to whatever curriculum is being delivered in their setting and, ultimately, to enable a young person with VI to move onto adulthood as independently as possible.

Should the framework link in to written support plans such as Education and Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)?

Parents should be fully involved in discussions around what should be included in a written plan of support for their child to ensure that it's as individual and relevant as possible. This could be a school plan or one that has some legal standing like an EHCP, a statement or an Individual Development Plan. The framework can provide some structure to those conversations and, by providing a common language for everyone involved, break down barriers so that everyone feels confident to ask questions or raise issues. For example, anyone in the room can choose an area of the framework, say Area 2: Sensory development, and ask how that's being addressed or what the plan is to cover that in the next year or so. In addition, the framework's 'Access to learning', 'Learning to

access' principle [1] prompts discussion around what's in place to promote independence and what's planned for the future.

The CFVI team have been pleased to hear that some local authorities in England have already started linking EHCP outcomes to areas in the framework.

Does the CFVI support parents' views being included when targets and outcomes are decided for their child?

The CFVI includes sample outcomes for all 11 areas to help everyone in the team around a CYP with VI to work together to set outcomes that are right at that time for that individual. It's a tool for partnership working. Parents and carers know their child better than anyone so can clearly outline needs and aspirations, both the child's and their own, whilst being realistic so that outcomes can be made challenging but attainable.

Is it a legal requirement for schools or local authorities to adhere to the framework?

At present the CFVI is not a statutory legal document in the UK. The ultimate goal is that the CFVI is recognised as statutory across the UK so there is a legal requirement for it to be followed. Through families and educators using it, and through campaigning work being done by the CFVI team, it is hoped that the CFVI will be included in best practice guidance and formal policies at both local and national government levels.

How can the framework help the team around a CYP with VI to monitor progress?

The framework isn't a progress tracking tool as such but it is built on the principle of developing skills to move towards independence and this promotes discussion around monitoring progress. On page 11 of the parent guide, there are suggestions of questions parents might want to ask, including, "What progress has been made in this area this year?" and "What support is planned to ensure progress is made in this area next year?". These questions could be asked referring to one of the 11 areas or more than one depending on what's most important for the individual at the time.

How does the framework help CYP with VI to become more independent rather than relying on adult support?

The model that underpins the framework is explained on page 5 of the Parent Guide with a diagram that helps to make it clearer. It's called 'Access to learning', 'Learning to access' [1] and it's the idea that in the early years of education, adults will have a lot of input to provide access to learning. This might be a teaching assistant supporting a child to move around school safely or it might be a resource technician providing modified worksheets and books in font 24. Over time though, the emphasis shifts to CYP with VI learning to access, that is learning specialist skills to be able to access learning more independently and rely less and less on adult support. And this isn't just accessing the curriculum, these skills allow access to the world around them. For example, if a young person can read electronic books in school, they can choose any book they want from an online library like Kindle or Apple Books and read it for leisure at home on their tablet.

Can the framework be helpful in situations where specialist support is needed but isn't being offered?

It can because it sets out the key skills that CYP with VI need specialist teaching for, within the 11 areas outlined in the framework. By looking at this together, families and mainstream staff can see which areas will require input from either a QTVI, RQHS or other specialist. The school can then work with the local authority to make that specialist teaching and support available. For example, navigation is in Area 5. This flags up to everyone that a habilitation specialist needs to teach this. Anyone who isn't a habilitation specialist probably wouldn't realise that there are a range of techniques that need to be adapted for the individual and taught. To illustrate, sequencing is a skill that underpins navigation and needs to be mastered before a child can sequence a route. A specialist has been trained to identify what skills a CYP with VI has already and then teach new skills, in the correct order, to build up to the desired outcome; they'll also support mainstream staff and families to consolidate any new skills through practice outside of designated habilitation lessons.

How can the framework support successful transitions?

The framework maps out what needs to be put in place for a transition to be successful and this helps to get everyone working together, making plans, well in advance.

The key to a successful transition, whether this is from one setting to another, from one stage of education to another, or moving beyond education, is to plan ahead. The curriculum framework acts as a prompt for looking to the future because of the underlying principle of continually learning new skills to move towards independence and the constant reminder provided by the inclusion of Area 11: Preparing for adulthood. Page 12 of the Parent Guide to the CFVI gives some conversation starters around transition that can be used to guide discussions between parents and professionals. For example, "Who will organise training for staff in the new setting?"

Parents might want, in the run up to a transition point, to go through the 11 areas of the framework with the QTVI to discuss what needs putting in place from each area. For example, from Area 5, it might be decided that habilitation training is needed so the learner can move around a new environment safely and confidently. Going through all the areas, even though some might not be relevant, would make sure that nothing was missed.

The framework gives examples of independence skills like cooking and using a cane so schools know they should be teaching these things, but it doesn't say when to ask for each skill to be taught. When parents go to a review meeting, how do they know what to ask for at that time and what to leave for later on?

Deciding what needs to be taught and when is complex so discussions around this will involve both the parent and professionals. The framework is flexible to allow provision to be tailored to each individual so, purposefully, it doesn't specify what should be taught when, only that teaching should be led by a suitable qualified specialist. Take the example of kitchen skills. After an assessment to find out what skills they have already, a CYP with VI might begin with table skills such as

learning to use cutlery and managing their lunchbox; when they're confident with this, they might learn to pour cold liquids using the fingertip method and then a liquid level indicator so they can get themselves a drink; this might be followed by food hygiene and learning to follow a sequence of instructions. This programme might be delivered to one child from early years but be more appropriate for another child from ages 6 or 7 perhaps.

The key is more on monitoring progress and working towards outcomes that are achievable for an individual than teaching certain things at specific ages. Specialist staff can advise on this but parents and mainstream staff should be involved in setting outcomes and monitoring progress.

Area 10 covers sport and leisure. Does this mean that schools and VI services might help families more to find opportunities for their child to participate in out of school activities that might be accessible for them?

The framework considers education in its widest sense so includes areas for wellbeing and social participation. Sport and physical activity are so important for wellbeing but also for things like teamwork, communication, mobility and confidence. Progress in these areas is advantageous for education in its widest sense and also brings opportunities beyond the classroom.

As well as the sports and activities that are routinely offered in mainstream schools there are a number of inclusive sports, that both sighted CYP and CYP with VI can play, such as Goalball where every player wears eye shades to make it a level playing field. Goalball and other inclusive sports can be played in schools and in community clubs and can be played at any level from beginner to elite. A number of local and national organisations offer social and sporting opportunities; many are listed on British Blind Sport's [Activity Finder](#) on their website; a quick search will show up what activities are available in any area of the country.

Activity groups provide great opportunities for CYP with VI to meet and a number of organisations run these, for example, VICTA, LOOK UK and RNIB's Shape and Share.

On page 7 of the Parent Guide, it says that not all of the 11 skill areas are relevant all the time, except for Area 1. Why is this?

Area 1 is titled 'Facilitating an Inclusive World' and acts as an umbrella for all the other areas. It's the only area that doesn't refer to skills that CYP with VI might need to be taught but instead covers adaptations to be made by the adults supporting their education. For instance, a school or college would be expected to make their campus accessible, staff might need training to gain the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to provide an inclusive educational experience, the necessary learning tools should be made available. No matter the age of the CYP with VI no matter the setting they're in, their educational experience needs to be inclusive so Area 1 is relevant at all times to all CYP with VI.

Areas 2-11 identify potential areas for skills development. The specialist skills curriculum will be personalised to match an individual's needs so interventions for all of the areas may not be needed at all times.

What parents can do

- Download the Parent Guide and the full CFVI and start to think about how it could help (www.rnib.org.uk/cfvi).
- Find an opportunity to present it to school or the local authority if they're not using it yet. An upcoming review meeting might be ideal where it could be used to support and structure the conversation. It can also be used to draw attention to areas for discussion that are particularly important at that time.
- Use it! The more widely used the CFVI becomes, the more likely governments are to include it in any new best practice guidance and education policies.

Support for families

Guide Dogs www.guidedogs.org.uk
Contact: children@guidedogs.org.uk

Look UK www.look-uk.org

RNIB www.rnib.org.uk
Contact: cypf@rnib.org.uk

RSBC www.rsbc.org.uk
Contact: connections@rsbc.org.uk

VICTA www.victa.org.uk

Useful links

CFVI Parent Guide and full CFVI document: [Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment | RNIB](#)

Goalball UK: [Schools & Juniors - Goalball UK](#)

British Blind Sport's [Activity Finder](#)

[Thomas Pocklington Trust](#)

References

1. McLinden, M., Douglas, G., Cobb, R., Hewett, R., & Ravenscroft, J. (2016). 'Access to learning' and 'learning to access': Analysing the distinctive role of specialist teachers of children and young people with vision impairments in facilitating curriculum access through an ecological systems theory. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 34(2), 177-195.