

Supporting children and young people with vision loss:

*Re-integration and transition guide
for educational settings for during and after
the COVID-19 pandemic*

**Barnsley Education Inclusion Services:
Vision Support Team**

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Being away from the educational setting

| Outcome | Why? | Questions to consider | Measures to achieve this (but will mainly depend on individual need) | Key people | Time frame |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>The child or young person feels familiar with the school environment.</p> | <p>A child /young person with vision loss often relies upon a consistent, predictable layout in order to create landmarks and find their way around.</p> <p>Familiarity with environment aids independence and a sense of security.</p> | <p>Will the child/young person be returning to the same area or classroom?</p> <p>Are the child's/ young person's resources in the same place?</p> <p>Will children/young people be placed differently within area/classroom?</p> <p>Will the child/young person know the way to the toilet, playground or rest areas?</p> <p>Are rooms and classroom doors kept closed to prevent collisions?</p> | <p>Practice in re-familiarising with the environment if it is the same or becoming familiar with the environment if it is different. (This will vary according to individual needs of each child/young person).</p> <p>Make sure the environment and resources are all vision friendly (see vision friendly environment).</p> <p>Liaise virtually with parents/carers and arrange a virtual meeting to enable parents to share their concerns about their child/young person returning to school.</p> <p>Liaise virtually with child/ young person to explain what will happen when they return to the educational setting</p> <p>Consider phased return if necessary.</p> <p>Consider pre-return visit to areas and classroom.</p> | <p>SENCO</p> <p>Key Worker/Class Teacher</p> <p>Parent/Carer</p> <p>Child/Young Person</p> <p>Vision Support Team where appropriate</p> | <p>Pre-entry to setting, school or college</p> |

Being away from the educational setting

| OUTCOME | Why? | Questions to consider | Measures to achieve this (but will mainly depend on individual need) | Key people | Time frame |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>The child / young person will feel safe returning to the educational setting.</p> | <p>If a child /young person does not feel a sense of safety within their learning environment, their sense of well-being will be affected and they will be less likely to learn. Levels of anxiety can affect visual functioning.</p> <p>Some children/young people will rely on touching surfaces, walls, furniture or people to attain a sense of where they are and who they are with.</p> <p>Furthermore, children /young people with visual loss often rely on fixed layouts, repetition, and practice of new skills; in order to feel secure in their environment - these important methods may have been interrupted by the virus.</p> | <p>Does the child/young person have any medical conditions or mental health difficulties that will affect their sense of safety in these times?</p> <p>Will the child/young person be using the same route, method or transport to get to setting, school or college?</p> <p>How does the child/young person feel about the virus?</p> <p>How will the setting, school or college deal with a visually impaired child's or young person's need to touch the things and people around him/her?</p> <p>What are their experiences of the virus?</p> <p>Has anybody in the child's or young person's family been affected by the virus?</p> <p>What Covid-19 safety measures have been instigated by the setting, school or college?</p> <p>How can we implement these for this child or young person?</p> | <p>Parent/Carer views sought</p> <p>Access to familiar children, young people and staff, where possible.</p> <p>If possible, the child /young person to remain in original areas and classroom.</p> <p>A member of staff to be responsible for sanitising the areas or furniture that a visually impaired child /young person needs to touch.</p> <p>If working in small 'bubble' groups, staff should encourage all the people in the group to use their voices as clues to their positioning and their identity.</p> <p>Timetables for the day (depending on individual need).</p> <p>Consider sending home a 'back to setting or school transition' booklet or share back to setting or school social story - contact Vision Support Team for further details</p> | <p>SENCO</p> <p>Key Worker/Class Teacher</p> <p>Parents/Carer</p> <p>Child/Young Person</p> <p>Vision Support Team where appropriate</p> | <p>Pre- entry and revisited in the first week of returning to setting, school or college</p> |

Being away from the educational setting

| OUTCOME | Why? | Questions to consider | Measures to achieve this (but will mainly depend on individual need) | Key people | Time frame |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>The child or person will have a sense of trust when returning to the educational setting.</p> | <p>Most children/young people will feel about it might largely depend on the conversations at home.</p> <p>Children/young people with visual loss might depend on key voices and touch to identify people and build a sense of trust.</p> | <p>Are key workers, teaching and support staff that were there before the educational setting closed?</p> <p>Have any staff from the educational setting, been in touch with the child/young person and or family?</p> <p>How does the child/young person feel about returning to the educational setting?</p> <p>Has the child's/young person's peer group changed?</p> | <p>Address fears of Covid – explain routine for hand and respiratory hygiene and ensure posters for these are Vision friendly</p> <p>Consider a 'buddy system' for social support, interaction, participation</p> <p>Consider sending home a 'back to setting, school transition' booklet or share back to setting or school social story</p> | <p>SENCO</p> <p>Key Worker/Class teacher</p> <p>Parent/Carer</p> <p>Child/Young Person</p> <p>Vision Support Team where appropriate</p> | <p>First week of attending setting, school or college</p> |

Being away from the educational setting

| Outcome | Why? | Questions to consider | Measures to achieve this (but will mainly depend on individual need) | Key people | Time frame |
|---|---|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| <p>The child/young person is ready to start learning in the educational setting again.</p> | <p>Children/young people with visual loss often have alternative methods of learning, modified resources and/or specialist equipment.</p> <p>It might be that the child/young person has had more limited access to these augmented forms of learning, and this would need to be considered.</p> | <p>Has the child/young person been able to access their normal way of learning? (Such as augmented learning methods).</p> | <p>Ensure environment and resources are all vision friendly (see 'Vision friendly environment').</p> | <p>SENCO</p> <p>Key Worker/Class Teacher</p> <p>Parent/Carer</p> <p>Child/Young Person</p> <p>Vision Support Team where appropriate</p> | |
| <p>The child/young person is in a position to make progress against their learning outcomes.</p> | <p>Children's learning experiences over the period of school closure will vary in terms of how much progress they have been able to make against age-related expectations.</p> <p>Most children/young people with visual loss will have specialist learning outcomes set by the habilitation officer or advisory teacher in order to underpin their independence skills and access to the curriculum – through school closure their contact with these professionals will have been more limited.</p> | <p>At what level is the child/young person currently secure?</p> <p>Where is the child/young person in relation to their SEN Support plan outcomes?</p> | <p>Revisit previous learning to ensure that learning is secure.</p> <p>Assess child /young person to establish that previous attained levels are secure.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for over learning, post/pre-teach as necessary to meet need.</p> <p>Seek specialist support for child/young person identified as making negative progress.</p> | <p>SENCO</p> <p>Key Worker/Class Teacher</p> <p>Parent/Carer</p> <p>Child/Young Person</p> <p>Vision Support Team where appropriate</p> | <p>During initial term</p> |

Being away from the educational setting

| OUTCOME | Why? | Questions to consider | Measures to achieve this (but will mainly depend on individual need) | Key people | Time frame |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>The educational setting is aware of any changes in visual needs.</p> | <p>Some children / young people have fluctuating vision and this can improve, deteriorate or change in nature.</p> <p>Any changes would undoubtedly affect visual functioning and henceforth, any reasonable adjustments that are put in place.</p> <p>Educational setting staff would need to be aware of any changes in vision through contact and communication with home.</p> | <p>Has the child /young person had any eye appointments over the time of the educational setting closure? If so, has the outcome of these appointments been communicated to school or the Vision Support Team?</p> | <p>Liaise with parents/carers</p> <p>Vision Support Team will share information received to educational settings.</p> | <p>SENCO</p> <p>Key Worker/Class Teacher</p> <p>Parent/Carer</p> <p>Vision Support Team where appropriate</p> | <p>Pre entry to setting, school or college</p> |

Vision-friendly environment

Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people

Vision-friendly environment

This will include:

- **Curtains/blinds** to control light from outside to reduce glare and keep lighting levels consistent
- **Bright, clear colours** in resources and displays
- **Clear** and **clutter-free** pathways. New environments can be difficult for children with a visual impairment to cope with as they are unable to make sense of a visual environment
- **Organised** and **accessible** resources. Consider the position of personal belongings to enable independence
- Keep layout of the **environment consistent**. However, should the setting need rearranging, explain and walk with the child to identify the changes
- Displays at **eye level**
- **Environmental audit** to ensure safety measures are in place - this can be arranged through contacting the Vision Support Team
- The child or young person may take time to recognise and identify members of staff through their voices
- Coat peg should be positioned at the end of a run and the use of a clear marker to identify the peg would also be helpful for the visually impaired child.
- Child or young person not 'fitting in' but '**belonging**'

Quality first teaching

Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people

Inclusion isn't about 'fitting in', it is about 'belonging'.

“Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, doesn't require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are.”

- Brene Brown from 'The Gifts of Imperfection'.

What does belonging look like?

- The opportunity to be equal, but also the right to learn in a different way.; the additional curriculum is fully embraced and viewed as integral by the educational setting
- Young people don't feel like a burden to the teacher or tutor for needing to learn in a different way
- Everyone feels well-regarded and valued
- Opportunities for children and young people with SEN to contribute, like everyone else
- Staff consider every learner's needs as being equally important when planning (i.e. modifications shouldn't be an after-thought)
- The keyworker, teacher or tutor KNOWS the child or young person.
- There are high expectations of every child and young person, regardless of Special Educational Needs.
- Everyone in the class is as familiar with a child's or young person's specialist equipment as with any other piece of equipment in the classroom.

Quality first teaching

Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people

- Give as many first-hand, 'real' multi-sensory experiences as possible; real objects that can be handled by the learner to support the teaching of concepts should be used wherever possible; thus, enabling a multi-sensory approach to enrich the learning experience
- Ensure correct seating in relation to board, whiteboard, Smartboard, considering levels of vision in each eye; following government guidelines
- Consider positioning within area or classroom in relation to the focus of the session; e.g. some children and young may need to sit close to the front, whereas as others may need to sit further back or to the side depending upon the eye condition and need
- Eliminate copying from the board - where copying is required, make sure appropriate print size photocopy is available
- Ensure that fonts are in the correct size (formatted) and only enlarged on a photocopier that is of a standard that will not pixelate the text or alter the quality
- Ensure that writing materials are appropriate for visual need; e.g. paper/books with bold black lines and bold, black fibre tipped pens

Quality first teaching

Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people

- Ensure the reading materials, such as worksheets, text books and reading books, are appropriate for visual need and modified large print or reformatted diagrams.
- Ensure desk slopes are available if required
- Ensure low vision aids, such as magnifiers, are available if required
- Ensure specialist equipment is available for practical subjects; e.g. level indicators for liquids, talking weight scales, large calculators, large high visibility protractors and rulers
- Ensure task lights are available if required
- Provision of laptop/tablet with personalised settings; e.g. screen reader, magnification, background colours and accessibility settings
- Consider connecting a personalised laptop in real time to interactive board so that children and young people can view the screen at close range

Quality first teaching

Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people

- Avoid the sharing of texts/monitors unless doing so is a priority for social reasons; e.g. working together on a project
- Short spells of visual activity should be interspersed with less visually demanding activities
- Careful planning of classroom layout to ensure best position for a child with vision loss (following government guidelines)
- Plan for provision of correct lighting to meet individual needs
- Plan for immediate access to water and regular hydration breaks throughout the day (dry eye)
- Plan for easy access and provision of protective eye wear and accessories; e.g. sunglasses in sunny weather or a peaked cap.
- The key worker, class teacher or tutor should plan to promote high expectations from children and young people with vision loss; there should be a focus on healthy attitudes to learning and positive behaviours.

Quality first teaching

Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people

- Self-advocacy should be promoted – create an environment where a child or young person can take control of part of their learning journey; this will improve not only their academic progress, but also their self-confidence in learning and wider life
- There should be extra time allowed for processing information and completing tasks
- Verbal commentary of what is being presented on the board should be provided
- There should be promotion of social inclusion and opportunities for a child or young person to work and play or socialise with peers
- There should be effective internal communication and liaison arrangements between staff; e.g. information for supply staff or support staff and at points of transition
- A vision-friendly school should ensure there is a welcoming atmosphere
- Carefully monitored and supported access to mobility aids

Quality first teaching

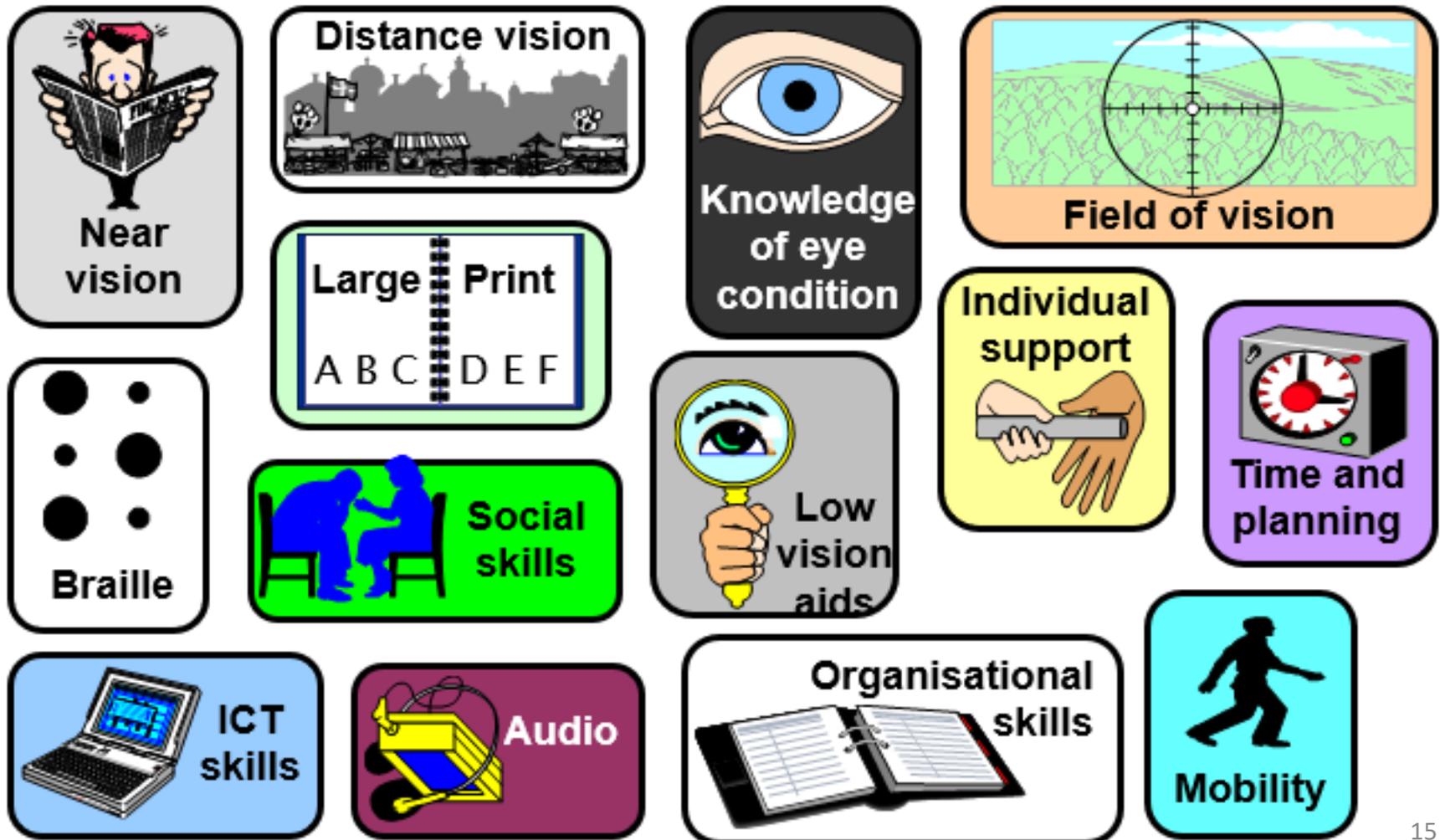
Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people

SENDCO

- SENDCO should refer to previous reports from the vision support team for advice around needs
- SENDCO should liaise with external professionals and support services to gather information to enable a full assessment of needs
- There should be close home/setting or school communication to enable changes in circumstances to be understood and addressed
- Educational settings should ensure that an environmental audit is carried out by a specialist at key transitional points
- Plan for health and safety risk assessments to take place regularly particularly before educational visits; ensure all key staff are aware of the health and safety requirements to meet need
- Follow advice from a Specialist Teacher/Habilitation Officer involved with the child or young person

Quality first teaching

Individual advice will be provided for high needs children and young people



Good practice for transition/re-integration

- Ensure environment and resources are all vision friendly (see vision friendly environment)
- Liaise virtually with parents/carers and arrange a virtual meeting to enable them to share their concerns about their child or young person returning to the educational setting
- Liaise virtually with the child or young person to explain what will happen when they return to their educational setting.
- Consider a phased return if necessary
- Consider a pre-return visit to rooms and classroom.
- Consider sending home a 'back to setting/school' booklet or share back to setting/school social story
- Address fears of Covid-19 – explain routine for hand and respiratory hygiene and ensure posters for these are accessible to children and young people with vision loss
- Consider setting up a home/setting or school journal for good communication with parents/carers
- Consider a 'buddy system' for social support, interaction and participation.

Contact the team

Please contact us for advice and support as required:

:

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Alternatively you can visit the below website and submit a query:

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/schools-and-learning/education-inclusion-services/vision-support/>