

Fact sheet

Supporting people while they wait for a Low Vision Assessment (LVA)

ECLOs are well placed to support patients awaiting low vision assessments to ensure they have the best experience whilst they wait and when their appointment takes place. ECLOs are not trained low vision specialists but can support people with a wide range of advice helping people make the most of their sight while they wait to be assessed by a specialist Low Vision Service.

Considerations for those awaiting a Low Vision Assessments:

1. When was the last opticians sight test? Has the consultant advised the patient not to update their specs or does the consultant give the recommendation for a sight test?
2. Are they using the correct glasses to read with? Remember the general principles for prescription spectacles: Clean, Current & Correct.
3. Is suitable task lighting in use?
4. Do they have an existing magnifier (Is it clean? Does it need new batteries/bulb? What's their technique like for using the aid?) (RNIB Hints and Tips for using magnifiers – available on request from Helpline) or LVA techniques ([Low vision aids - Macular Society](#))
5. Check the individual's understanding of the Low Vision Assessment service – i.e. what they are waiting for. Provide basic explanation of aids that may be offered. The areas the assessment will cover: reading vision, distance vision, glare, etc. Advise about preparing for a low vision assessment - taking current spectacles and existing magnifiers along with examples of tasks they struggle with.



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Helpline 0303 123 9999

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

6. Any sudden/recent vision changes? Provide usual advice about when and how to seek support whilst waiting.
7. Provide initial assessment of need(s), if not recently supported by ECLO - there may be other appropriate support the individual can access whilst they await the Low Vision Assessment.
8. Seek clinical advice before considering a CVI SI with a patient awaiting a low vision assessment - they may not have had a full refraction assessment for some time. (We know that approximately 25% of first-time low vision assessment patients may benefit from a change in prescription and this could affect their visual acuity.) If the person has very poor vision – at an SSI level – then there is likely to be no need to await the LVA assessment outcome before initiating a CVI.

Other advice to consider:

Below you will find other suggestions of issues to discuss with individuals who are awaiting a low vision assessment. Each of these will help the individual to make the most of their sight.

Bigger

- sources of large print – locally and nationally
- using digital options on smart phones/tablets/digital assistants (Alexa, Echo, etc.), consider referral to RNIB Sight Loss Advice and factsheets listed below
- visiting local societies for demonstrations of equipment/use of digital aids face to face
- advise the individual to try moving closer to TV, destinations boards, detail tasks, etc. (Sitting closer in effect makes it appear bigger, so it is a form of magnification due to proximity.)

Bolder

- accessible information, consider RNIB Sight Loss Advice referral to complete accessible information toolkit to support with this
- contrast for kitchen/detail tasks
- bump-ons to mark appliances, etc.
- using reverse contrast on digital devices
- black felt tip pens and dark lined paper

Brighter

- lighting checklists - [Lighting Guide \(pocklington.org.uk\)](http://pocklington.org.uk) or [Lighting - Macular Society](#))
- Controlling light is also important - hat with a brim, wraparound glare shields, vertical blinds at the windows. Patients that like more task lighting will almost certainly have disability glare too.

Access to Work – check whether contact with ATW may be appropriate whilst awaiting LVA assessment. No need to wait.

Exhibitions - Sight Village, local societies/resource centres to view aids (NB Some Vision Rehabilitation Services may have the capacity to assess for LVAs – it is worth checking availability in your area.)

Other non-optical considerations:

- reading stands
- typoscopes – a device to limit the field of view i.e. a smaller area of print . These cheap aids can be helpful for scanning or where there is field loss (e.g. hemianopia). They also help reduce glare from a white page for patients that are sensitive to light.
- large print calculators
- digital recorders
- visors and tinted glasses to reduce glare (Glare/Eyeshields: [How to choose eye shields - Sight Advice FAQ](#))
- coloured overlays to provide contrast
- Talking/tactile products – resource centre/local society/RNIB shop

Other optical and low vision devices - these can be used to adjust and enhance images and text. They would require an assessment to ensure they were appropriate:

- screen magnifiers
- Scanner/readers
- E-books
- Private low vision assessment options (with an associated cost) – will vary locally and should be researched by local ECLO
- Loan options for digital aids – again, local research needed.

Useful guides to refer to for specific patient groups – available on request via the RNIB Helpline

10 tips on how technology can help people with dementia and sight loss

Top tips on improving environment learning disability and sight loss

The following factsheets have been prepared by the RNIB Technology for Life Team and are available to individuals contacting the Tech for Life Team via the RNIB Helpline.

Technology and apps:

- Accessible televisions (Word)
- Amazon Echo (Word)
- Android phones and tablets (Word)
- Apple phones and tablets (Word)
- Be My Eyes RNIB specialized help (Word)
- Braille displays (Word)
- Choosing an audio reading device (Word)
- Desktop accessibility (Word)
- Google Nest (Word)
- GPS Navigation (Word)
- Helpful apps (Word)
- How to use an accessible touchscreen chip and pin device (Word)
- How to use an accessible touchscreen chip and PIN device (PDF)
- iPad basic intro to voice over (Word)
- Orbit Reader - Trouble Shooting (Word)
- Screen magnification (Word)
- Screen reading software (Word)
- Seeing AI app (Word)
- Talking Book players (Word)
- TapTapSee app (Word)
- Useful Android apps (Word)
- Video calling (Word)
- Wearable technology - smart glasses and head cameras (Word)
- Windows Key Commands (Word)

Audio description:

- Audio description (Word)
- Audio description on Freeview (Word)
- Audio description on Virgin media (Word)
- Audio description on Sky (Word)

Newsagent

- Using Newsagent on an Android device (Word)
- Using Newsagent on an Apple device (Word)
- Accessing Newsagent talking newspapers on a Windows computer (Word)
- Accessing Newsagent text newspapers and magazines on a computer (Word)

Other

- Landline phones - the switch to digital (word)

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Document ends.